

WE'RE GONNA DO IT ANYWAY:
A CASE STUDY IN TENSIONS BETWEEN SAFETY AND CREATIVITY IN
BALTIMORE CITY ARTIST RUN SPACES

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Land Acknowledgement¹

I acknowledge that the places today known as Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Harford County, and Cecil County exist as the result of duress. In 1652, Susquehannock leaders unwillingly transferred these lands to the English in an unsuccessful effort to stop English settlers encroaching up the Susquehanna River. I acknowledge that these places and their Indigenous inhabitants exist without rigid political borders and boundaries maintained by settlers and settler governments.

I acknowledge the social, physical, spiritual, and kinship relationships this land continues to share with Indigenous nations of the Susquehanna River and Chesapeake Bay; I acknowledge that these relationships have been displaced, damaged, and dispelled by colonists' insatiable thirst for acquisition and domination. I acknowledge a place out of balance with its true purpose in being. I acknowledge our occupation of Susquehannock lands. I acknowledge the continuing presence of Indigenous nations, and the shelter and nourishment that this place continues to provide all Native peoples who live here today. I acknowledge my responsibility to Indigenous nations to repair unhealthy relationships and to steward all life.

I acknowledge that today, American Indians from across North America live in Baltimore. The City and County are home to a large diasporic community of Lumbee people, whose traditional lands are in present-day North Carolina.²

I acknowledge that the Piscataway Indian Nation continues to maintain a relationship with the lands where I write this thesis today. Along with the Piscataway Conoy Tribe, the Piscataway Indian Nation received recognition by the State of Maryland in 2012. I acknowledge their long-standing kinship with these lands and waters and acknowledge that we are uninvited visitors on Indigenous lands. To make this statement more meaningful, I invite you to learn more about the Piscataway Indian Nation and about land acknowledgement statements via resources available at msac.org and elsewhere, to consider donating or making institutional resources available to tribal peoples, and to reconsider in what ways you can improve your relationship with the lands you steward.

¹ All land acknowledgements are used with permission from the Maryland State Arts Council's Land Acknowledgement Resource Guide. Some are based on a land acknowledgment statement drafted by a Susquehanna and Shawnee elder for the MSAC Land Acknowledgment Project. See <https://msac.org/resources/land-acknowledgements> for additional information and resources on Maryland land acknowledgements and for more information on the state's indigenous peoples.

² To learn more about the Lumbee and other Baltimore-based urban Indian communities, visit the Ashley Minner Collection in the Maryland Traditions Archives at UMBC.

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Abstract

The notions of safety and creativity are often irreconcilable opposites in planning, developing, and operating spaces of arts and culture. The issues affecting arts and cultural spaces are indicative of systemic tensions involving planning, policy, code enforcement, gentrification, affordable housing, policing, and local economies. This paper investigates how safety and creativity can coexist in Baltimore City's self-organized artist run spaces and the cultural ecosystem. While artist run spaces are tapped and lauded as economic drivers, vital to a city's identity and economic landscape, in Baltimore, they are consistently relegated and regulated, sometimes pushed underground in the built, political, and social environment in which they exist. What can or should, therefore, contribute to the success and vitality of artist run spaces? What are the challenges these spaces and cultural producers face? The purpose of this research is to examine, summarize, and daylight challenges and potentials for safety and creativity to coexist, in order to preserve, protect, and sustain spaces by and for the arts.

I argue that self-organized arts spaces must be acknowledged, accommodated, and planned for, and the coexistence of their safety and creativity must not only be allowed but *enabled*. *We're Gonna Do It Anyway: A Case Study in Tensions Between Safety and Creativity in Baltimore City Artist Run Spaces* explores and introduces the intersects and disconnects between how artists and planners envision safety and creativity. Through the case study of the Bell Foundry and the Arts Safe Space Task Force in Baltimore City, dominant and authoritarian vs. grassroots and ad-hoc roles are explored and questioned, divergent ideologies are evidenced, and lessons learned posit a future of planning with and for artist run spaces that is less authoritarian/conflict-based and more collective/holistic/vertically integrated. Inspired and informed by informal interviews and by mining sources that document and respond to national and local tragedies that occurred in artist run spaces, the thesis shows that artists and audiences need not die in vain if the dominant culture can learn from and work with its creative subjects. Everyone wins when creativity and safety coexist.

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Part 01: Introduction

“Everything is free now/ That’s what they say/ Everything I ever done/ Gonna give it away

Someone hit the big score/ Figured it out/ That we’re gonna do it anyway/ Even if it doesn’t pay...”

- “Everything is Free” cover by Flock of Dimes with Sylvan Esso, 2015 | Flock of Dimes being Jen Wasner’s solo project started when she was a resident of the Bell Foundry

The notions of safety and creativity are often irreconcilable opposites in planning, developing, and operating spaces of arts and culture. As the issues affecting arts and cultural spaces are indicative of systemic tensions among planning, policy, code enforcement, gentrification, affordable housing, policing, and local economies, this paper investigates how safety and creativity can coexist in Baltimore City’s self-organized artist run spaces and the cultural ecosystem. While artists and artists run spaces are tapped and lauded as economic drivers, vital to a city's identity and economic landscape, they are consistently regulated and relegated to the underbelly of a formal existence in the built, political, and social environment to which they contribute. What can or should, therefore, contribute to the success and vitality of artist run spaces? What are the challenges these spaces and cultural producers face? The purpose of this research is to examine, summarize, and daylight challenges and potentials for safety and creativity to coexist, in order to preserve, protect, and sustain spaces by and for the arts.

I argue that self-organized art spaces must be acknowledged, accommodated, and planned for, and the coexistence of their safety and creativity must not only be allowed but also enabled. The following explores and introduces the intersects and disconnects between how artists envision safety and creativity and how planners envision safety and creativity. Through deep investigation of the Bell Foundry evictions and the resultant Arts Safe Space Task Force in Baltimore City, dominant and authoritarian versus grassroots and ad hoc roles are explored and questioned, divergent ideologies are evidenced, and lessons learned might posit a future of planning with and for artist run spaces that is less authoritarian/conflict based and more

collective/holistic/vertically integrated. Inspired and informed by mining sources that document and respond to national and local tragedies that occurred in artist-run spaces, the following details that artists and audiences need not die in vain if the dominant can learn from and work with its creative subjects, and that everyone wins when creativity and safety coexist.

In order to investigate the concepts outlined above more deeply, the research design included a literature review focusing on frequent intersections and divergences between artist run spaces and planners including creativity, artists and gentrification, and creative placemaking. I conducted 74 on-record or 98 total informal interviews with Baltimore City artists, arts service organization professionals, City and State officials, community and economic developers, non-profit leaders, arts service and advocacy organizations, and other creative and cultural stakeholders, including members of the Arts Safe Space Task Force. Additional stakeholders are defined as individuals actively involved in local institutions including philanthropic organizations and community development corporations or individuals directly involved with neighborhood or community revitalization or redevelopment. Given my relationship with the interviewees and the kind of information sought, the interviews were conducted as informal, guided conversations, “using the interviewees’ responses to direct interview flow (Carr and Servon 2008).” Additional data was collected from primary and secondary source documents, and archival material was mined for quotations, statements, and investigative journalism that evidenced the real time experiences of Baltimore’s arts and planning ecosystem. Background and context research investigated other cities’ correlating efforts to prevent both displacement and death in the immediate aftermath of the Ghost Ship while supporting arts and culture - namely Oakland and Seattle. Additional background and context on the Arts Safe Space Task Force establishes the Baltimore Task Force’s formation, efforts, and policy recommendations and establishes the Bell Foundry’s place in the city’s political, cultural, and social ecosystem.

The resulting recommendations and analysis posit questions and strategies for the ongoing theoretical, policy, social, and practical domains of art spaces and artists and the built environment of a shrinking city. What factors led to the work of the art safe space task force? What were the experiences of the artists of the bell foundry, and how did they understand the buildings risks and rewards? What of the Arts Safe Space Task force efforts have had lasting impact on art spaces in Baltimore City? What can other cities learn from the mistakes and successes of the Arts Safe Space Task Force in developing social, regulatory, and financial policy to preserve, protect, and sustain spaces by and for the arts? Can safety and creativity coexist?

The Ghost Ship, The Bell Foundry Evictions & Formation of The Mayor's Task Force on Safe Arts Spaces

In 2003, a fire in The Station – an arts and music venue in Rhode Island - Became the deadliest structural fire in the United States,³ leading to the alteration of not only the building code and zoning laws related to cultural gathering spaces, but also the way artists themselves produced, assembled, and created. Thirteen years later the Ghost Ship fire in an artist run warehouse in Oakland, CA nearly replaced The Station for the number of lives claimed by incendiary catastrophe in the US. (Hepler 200AD) Across the nation, localities struggled with how

³ In February of 2003, the *New York Times* reported of The Station fire:

The inferno at a club called the Station was the deadliest nightclub fire in the United States in 25 years and one of the worst in the country's history, with the death toll exceeding that of the 1990 Happy Land social club fire in the Bronx, which killed 87.

Survivors described a ghastly scene that began when the heavy metal band Great White lighted pyrotechnic cones on stage minutes after its concert began around 11 p.m. and a shower of white sparks appeared to ignite foam sound-proofing material that lined walls near the stage. The authorities said the fire spread almost instantly to paneling and a low-hanging suspended ceiling.

Numerous witnesses said the building was almost instantly engulfed in flames and patrons bolted for doorways and smashed windows. People raced and clambered outside with their hair and flesh on fire.

... West Warwick's fire chief, Charles Hall, said the club had been inspected two months ago. But he said that neither the club nor the band appeared to have obtained the necessary town or state fire permits for a pyrotechnics display. (Belluck and Zielbauer 2003)

to address spaces for and by the arts. In Baltimore City, the ghost ship tragedy and subsequent eviction crisis at the Bell Foundry – a BIPOC queer space – in December of 2016 exposed a dire need, and catalyzed mayoral and public calls to prioritize safe spaces in arts and culture.

In the immediate aftermath of the Ghost Ship tragedy, US mayors, city officials, residents, and artists, asked: where was the Ghost Ship of their town, and what do they do about it? (Mejia 2016) The issues affecting art spaces are indicative of systemic problems with policy, code enforcement, gentrification, affordable housing, policing, and local economies. (Tolle, Mph, Chen, and Hsu, Md, Mph 2020) In Baltimore City, then mayor Catherine Pugh, issued an Executive Order on April 4, 2017 to protect residents of art spaces from eviction if there was no imminent threat to life and safety of occupants. (Case 2017b; Weigel 2017) Met with local and national celebration, the Executive Order in Baltimore also contributed to the ensuing chaos - a clash between, on the one hand, artists and creatives who thought the order should actually engender the protection it claimed to provide, and on the other, the ambiguous understanding of what a threat to life and safety meant, on behalf of the industry and city professionals whose mandate is to define and enforce building code and zoning policy.

In an attempt to immediately respond to the evictions of the Bell Foundry, and prior to issuing the executive order that staved arts space evictions, Pugh created the Mayor's Task Force on Safe Arts Spaces - a group of industry professionals ranging from artists to lawyers to architects to developers - to wade through the mire of opinions, needs, policy, and the conditions of the built and cultural environment, in order to make recommendations that would alter the landscape in Baltimore, hopefully preventing another Ghost Ship tragedy from happening. However, Baltimore City was already in the hot seat, as local fire and building code inspectors had - on the heels of the Ghost Ship tragedy - evicted the residents and theatre tenants of the space mentioned above, the Bell Foundry, only three days after the Ghost Ship fire. Pugh, while only newly sworn in as Mayor, was seemingly quick to respond, but not quick enough. In classic fashion, Baltimore

City, while having the national spotlight, was literally a day late and many, many dollars short on its reaction - not only locally, but also in serving as a national model for its response to the arts-space crisis in the wake of the Ghost Ship tragedy.

Nation-wide Response To & Repercussions of the Ghost Ship

Nationwide, in response to Ghost Ship, artist run spaces were either shuttered or closed down by the municipalities or took themselves further underground - ceasing or further hiding their programming in fear that they would be shut down if they hadn't already been. However, across the nation, officials acknowledged off-the-record that while they couldn't approve of illegal parties, exhibitions, performances or residences in crumbling or non-code compliant warehouses, there was consensus that "underground spaces are part of how cities work and are likely to remain so. (Dougherty 2016)" In response to the threats and to ensure artist run spaces remain, formal and grassroots efforts sweeping the country rose to the challenge of preserving and supporting these spaces, understanding and valuing their integral place in the cultural ecosystem.

While the Ghost Ship was still smoldering and before all of the victims had been identified, officials began investigating and, as with the Bell Foundry, evicting residents from artist run spaces nationwide. *Rolling Stone Magazine* reported that on December 5, 2016 – the same day as the Bell Foundry evictions, "the Nashville Fire Department shut down a Nobunny performance at the all-ages venue Drkmtr, and warned the Glass Mènage that any future performances would be promptly halted. (Mejia 2016) But it didn't end with Baltimore or Nashville, the list went on as days and weeks passed, and before the end of the year,

...the Denver Fire Department and Police Department shuttered the sister venues Rhinocerospolis and Glob on December 8th, and evicted 11 total people who lived there. In neighboring Colorado Springs, the fire department shuttered local fixture Flux Capacitor because it didn't have the proper zoning to host public

events. Several underground venues in Los Angeles, including Purple 33, have been given the ax. (Gensler 2016)

Stories of arts space shutdowns continued to surface across social media forums and headlines bled across the country. *Billboard Magazine* reported on aggressive reactions in other cities, including that arts and event spaces in Philadelphia, Dallas, Indianapolis and New Haven being under greater scrutiny and facing closure. (Gensler 2016) *The New York Times* added Austin and Dubuque to the growing tally. (Dougherty 2016) ‘They used the Oakland tragedy to start a war,’ said Ryan Pelham, a 31-year-old Nashville musician who was forced to shut down his house shows at the Glass Menage ... ‘We had these little parties and shows to help struggling musicians ... We had something special here.’ (Gensler 2016)” The trauma was so quick, so vast, and so shocking, even *The Guardian* covered the chaos sweeping the U.S., reporting January 4, 2017 on shutdowns and evictions in California’s San Francisco, Oakland, Richmond, Emeryville, Fresno, and Los Angeles, along with Colorado Springs, New York, and Dallas. (Levin 2016) “Punitive municipal inspections and surprise evictions have been particularly concerning for artist communities in cities already struggling with housing crises where a lack of affordable spaces have forced many to perform in unregulated venues and live in substandard conditions, (Levin 2016)” *The Guardian* noted.

In Philadelphia, Karen Guss, a spokeswoman for the city’s Licenses and Inspections Department, noted the immediate need for multi-pronged, multi-scalar, collective support to respond to the tragedy sweeping the nation. “We are concerned about exactly what happened in Oakland. There is no way this city or any city of size is going to be able to address these issues on their own. (Dougherty 2016)” Grassroots efforts rose to the challenge. Utilizing social media and open-source websites, artists and cultural producers across the country collaborated to provide support for artist run spaces. Park (formerly Melissa J.) Frost, a Philadelphia architect, worked with organizers in Seattle to set up a website called Saferspac.es which offered an international

platform where tenants could find safety advice and financial help. (Dougherty 2016) Frost wrote in the website's introduction: "[Saferspac.es] is for all of us who understand that the fire in Oakland was not an unlikely accident, but rather an inevitability given the dangerous precarity of the spaces in which underground D.I.Y. culture exists nationally. This is for everyone waiting to see these communities flourish and wanting to see to it that this does not happen again. (Dougherty 2016)" Their statement summarizes the collective intention of grassroots activism sweeping the country on behalf of artist run spaces.

"Previously Overlooked for Years"

Oakland, the epicenter of the tragedy and cultural evisceration, was hit especially hard, and quickly. *KALW Bay Area Public Media* reported,

The Oakland mayor's office officially knows of 18 large industrial spaces doubling as unpermitted homes, but other estimates say there are dozens more, maybe as many as 60.

It's hard to know since so many of these spaces are trying to hide from the city to avoid evictions.

... since the Ghost Ship fire, many spaces around the Bay have gotten inspections or eviction notices. A Richmond space known as Burnt Ramen, and another one just a few blocks from the Ghost Ship in East Oakland have both been closed by their respective cities.

Many warehouse residents are on edge and not just because of increased scrutiny since [early] December. The Ghost Ship fire came at the end of a year in which two of the most high profile live/work spaces in West Oakland were evicted. 1919 Market, which housed dozens of people, and Lobot, which was well known for music and art shows. (Dalmas 2017)

According to other reports, "the residents of Burnt Ramen [in California], many of whom were close with victims of the Ghost Ship fire, were dealing with imminent eviction-threat even before they had had a chance to attend their friends' funerals. (Martin 2018)" Meanwhile, "Spaces like ... Denver's Rhinocerosopolis were shut down for non-life-threatening compliance issues that had been previously overlooked for years. (Martin 2018)"

While the need for safety was universally accepted, many of these artist run spaces had existed for decades to incubate music and arts scenes that otherwise would have been priced out of major cities and had come to define places' and communities' cultural identity. "David Mancuso's Loft parties in New York, Washington, D.C.'s Madam's Organ and even Andy Warhol's Factory might never have existed if they had to obtain permits. (Gensler 2016)" Solutions seemed impossible to artists in despair across the country. "What we need are solutions that don't seek to eradicate these spaces, but which allow them to come safely into the light and support them economically in becoming safer and more accountable — something that is impossible so long as we pretend they don't exist," a Bay area artist told the *New York Times* (Dougherty 2016). While none aim to live in unsafe conditions, it was often the only choice available that fostered their community, their financial state, and their creativity. In addition, pathways to legality via permitted space were costly or inaccessible.

Oakland's official response was swift and robust as the community rallied to demand justice and support, though the city denied responsibility for the Ghost Ship fire. On January 11, 2017, then Mayor Libby Schaaf issued *Executive Order 2017-1: Improving Safety of Non-Permitted Spaces While Avoiding Displacement*⁴. The first of its kind in the country, the Executive Order required owners of existing buildings, not permitted for residents or not code compliant, to make a plan within 60 days with city officials to correct the spaces' deficits or to make immediate corrections. (Mayor Schaaf 2017) Another provision specified owners and city officials must "avoid displacement of any individuals residing or working in the property if that can be accomplished without imminent life safety risk. (Mayor Schaaf 2017)" Mayor Schaaf wrote in the order, "We must take additional steps to protect physical, cultural, and artistic assets and workspaces in the community while making necessary changes to improve life safety, provide for safer public events

⁴ See Appendix A: Comparison Cities References & Resources for Oakland's Executive Order 2017-1.

and improve standards and procedures for evaluating and assuring compliance. (Mayor Schaaf 2017)”

The intention of Oakland’s executive order was to increase safety at un-permitted, illegal live/work arts spaces while avoiding displacements, and it was designed to calm the terrified arts community and general public. Executive Order 2017-1 was not the beginning of Oakland’s robust and dedicated responses to the tragedy and public outcry. On December 6, 2016, as the Ghost Ship fire was just dying down, but before all of the victims had been identified, Schaaf announced both the formation of a fire safety task force and a \$1.7 million pledge to help artists and local organizations secure, sustain, and create affordable space. (B. Dandridge-Lemco 2017) Less than a week after the fire, Schaaf proposed the "Keeping Space" initiative in partnership with CAST — the Community Arts Stabilization Trust, a community-centered real estate organization for artists and cultural workers in the San Francisco Bay Area — to provide direct financial and technical assistance to arts and cultural groups facing displacement. *Keeping Space – Oakland* was one strategy of many proposed by the Oakland Arts Workspace Group, a public-private partnership that includes the Kenneth Rainin Foundation, CAST, Northern California Community Loan Fund, and the City of Oakland, with funding from the Kenneth Rainin Foundation and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.⁵ (CAST 2017) The program also intended to provide additional grant support to help those same artists and organizations acquire property. (Jones 2017)

To respond to not only the urgent need for reform highlighted by the deaths at the Ghost Ship, but also to a tentacled lawsuit that named not only individuals but also the city on behalf of the injured and deceased, Oakland created an interagency collaboration to support and preserve artist run spaces and reevaluate how building and fire inspections work, with an eye towards

⁵ See the announcement of *Keeping Space’s* pilot program for further detail: <https://cast-sf.org/keeping-space-oakland-announcements/>

equity and affordability rather than punishment. The lawsuits filed against the city of Oakland and Alameda County by the families of Griffen Madden and Michela Gregory used the language of the city fire officials to describe the Ghost Ship, calling it a “death trap.” (McLaughlin 2016) *CNN* reported on their claims to how the fire department’s negligence to inspect or intervene in the Ghost Ship prior to the fire led to the injuries and fatalities:

Madden and Gregory tried to escape the Ghost Ship once the deadly fire broke out and both knew they were “likely going to perish” because they could not escape the blaze, the lawsuits say.

Both were alive, fearing for their safety, when they were overcome by fire and smoke, killing them. Neither died instantaneously, according to the suit. Rather, both were “injured and suffered from the injuries caused by the fire and smoke for many minutes before dying,” it says.

“Michela’s body was found inside the Ghost Ship with her boyfriend of five years, Alex Vega. Alex’s arms were wrapped around Michela, trying to protect her from the fire,” one of the lawsuits says.

Madden’s body was also found inside the Ghost Ship, according to his family’s lawsuit.

“As a result of the horrific, gross negligence of the defendants in this case, these two young people have lost their lives.” (McLaughlin 2016)

Other national coverage of the devastation of the Ghost Ship fire drove home the humanitarian need for Oakland and other cities to respond to the crisis swiftly and visibly. “A final text from the building, according to *The East Bay Times*, which won a Pulitzer Prize for its Ghost Ship reporting, said, ‘I love you. I’m going to die, Mom.’ (Weil 2018)”

As the work of Oakland’s fire safety task force continued, Oakland’s Policy Director for Arts Spaces said the city planned to “update outdated building and zoning codes, create an FAQ to help artists to better understand city laws and establish a loan fund to encourage property owners to renovate their spaces without displacing artists. In the process, Oakland has had to work at improving the relationships between the city and artists” – an effort which remains a work in progress. (Case 2017c)

“What Stands in the Way of Creating More Cultural Space is an Exhausting Series of Relatively Low Hurdles.”

Artists and other municipalities recognized the similarities of the Ghost Ship’s landscape in their areas and took reactionary and preventative measures to course correct. Seattle stands out as a case study for its not only exemplary but also poetic and holistically thorough understanding of the challenges and the opportunities in planning with and for artists. Seattle created *The CAP Report*, also known as the ‘30 Ideas Plan,’ and issued a definition for artist run spaces that served as a national model. Seattle’s comprehensive response was possible because of deep and ongoing data collection and analysis of the arts and cultural sectors via the city’s Office of Arts and Culture, known as the *Cultural Space Inventory*, and because of trusted leadership and interdisciplinary collaboration on the part of the Seattle Arts Council and coalition of other local, trusted arts and cultural leaders.

While Seattle’s response to the nationwide shuttering of arts spaces was rooted in the same fear and analysis of the cultural and economic environment evidenced by other cities – could a Ghost Ship happen in Seattle? Of course, – the city and the arts and cultural community were committed to solving what they could do about it without experiencing a single death or displacement. The official process began on December 16, 2016 with an open letter⁶ arguing against an all-or-nothing mentality from the Seattle Arts Commission, the Seattle Music Commission, the Historic Central Area Arts and Cultural District, and the Capitol Hill Arts District to then Mayor Ed Murray. The coalition’s letter provided recommendations and eloquently acknowledged the tensions between safety and creativity inherent in artist run spaces, saying, “venues are not “safe” or “unsafe” – they are more and less safe along a spectrum. Thinking of safety as a spectrum, instead of a binary state, will bring our efforts to ensure safety in line with the world around us.” (Seattle Arts Commission et al. 2016) Like their understanding of

⁶ See Appendix A: Comparison Cities References & Resources for open letter from Seattle coalition.

safety being subjective and fluid, the authors also had a mature understanding of the contexts of safety's relationship to local and national challenges. Their interest in solutions acknowledged this context in a way all planners should emulate:

We recognize the urgent need for safe and affordable housing, workspace, and gathering space. As we bear witness to a rash of evictions of warehouses in other cities following the Oakland tragedy, we emphasize that reactionary shutdown of essential community spaces is not an appropriate, sustainable, or equitable response. Even when the intention is to protect the public by preventing imminent catastrophe, eviction creates another emergency: the violence of displacement.

We hold ourselves and our fellow public servants accountable to the City's own Race and Social Justice Initiative. In a city that struggles to resolve a housing and homelessness crisis in the midst of a massive construction and population boom, and where many low-income people and spaces have already been displaced, responses to public and individual safety must be driven by a commitment to support and nurture all of our neighbors. Hasty evictions come at the expense of the most vulnerable, whether or not they are artists. Historic precedent shows that abrupt building vacancies have ripple effects throughout their neighborhoods, with some areas unable to recover decades later. Furthermore, displaced people and spaces will reappear elsewhere. Adversarial enforcement merely punishes our communities for their financial inability to improve code compliance. It neither reduces noncompliant space, nor increases safety. Instead, it drives people further underground and further away from our shared goal of improving safety. ...

We stand in solidarity to support and protect all Seattleites who depend on vulnerable housing, work, and gathering spaces - including but not limited to artists, performers, and cultural spaces. In honor of those who perished in Oakland, we commit to preserving and improving the spaces that allow our creative, passionate community members to thrive. Our recognition of the challenges related to safe, affordable cultural space in Seattle and other cities is accompanied by our interest in solutions. To that end, recommendations for your consideration are included here. (Seattle Arts Commission et al. 2016)

The initial recommendations included with the letter directly informed the creation of the '30 Ideas Plan' and continued to inspire and engage the locally and nationally active grassroots cultural activists of Seattle and beyond. Their collective work became a national model and support system across the spectrum, for municipalities and the arts and cultural underground. Grassroots responses led by a consortium of artists, architects, designers, and citizens including S. Surface, and unlicensed architect and artist living in Seattle who also served on the Seattle Arts Commission, included the creation of an open source online document *Harm Reduction for DIY Venues* which translated regulatory and building code language into digestible and legible steps

that artist run spaces could take to make their spaces safer.⁷ As this was available immediately and updated in real-time, it was accessible to artist run spaces across the country while they scrambled to protect their territory in the wake of the nationwide crackdown.

The development of *The CAP Report/The 30 Ideas Plan*⁸ was a patient planning process that embedded the grassroots activists' efforts into official policy production based on a wealth of thoroughly collected data on the region's arts and cultural sectors and populations. Seattle's Office of Arts and Culture prior to the Ghost Ship had been collecting data via the *Cultural Space Inventory* in which they had identified 860 existing arts and cultural spaces⁹ in their jurisdiction that could be at risk of "instability." (Schofield 2017) Seattle's hypothesis was that there was a strong correlation between the "stability" of arts and cultural spaces and their financial ability to "not only continue to reside there but also to keep compliant with building and fire codes. In other words: stepping up enforcement of codes will lead to closing some spaces, and evicting tenants — with the most financially vulnerable being most likely to get evicted. (Schofield 2017)" The hypothesis was confirmed in an additional survey that asked how "stable" arts and cultural space operators felt.

⁷ See Appendix E: Recommendations References & Resources for *Harm Reduction for DIY Venues*.

⁸ While the official abbreviated name of the report is *The CAP Report*, all interviewees and background contacts for this paper - individuals who were involved with or used the report - referenced this report as "The 30 Ideas Plan." I will adopt their lexicon as the default herein.

⁹ According to the *City Council Insight*, in October 2017, Seattle's Office of Arts and Culture had,

... identified 860 such spaces, and tried to survey their operators to understand better who they serve. They admit their survey results are incomplete and far from scientific, however, since just over half the spaces completed their survey, they have no insights as to why the other half didn't, and not all questions were answered, so they don't know whether there are unintentional biases in the tabulated results. They do know that their survey questions about the ethnicities served by the facilities lack the proper nuance, though. Nevertheless, they presented some data on who the patrons of the arts and cultural spaces are.

So if the survey respondents are representative of the entire population, then we can take away from this that a significant portion of the spaces are serving ethnically diverse audiences, in addition to the large number of sites serving primarily white audiences (not surmising in a city whose population is more than 60% white). (Schofield 2017)

Combining the data findings regarding equity and stability with the input garnered from community activists and in partnership with the arts and cultural sectors, Seattle developed *The CAP Report: 30 Ideas for the Creation, Activation, and Preservation of Cultural Space*.¹⁰ This ‘30 Ideas Plan’ was released less than six months after the Ghost Ship fire in May 2017. The report first focused on the context that leads to displacement of arts and cultural spaces:

Despite cultural space’s role in strengthening neighborhoods, creating and maintaining these spaces in strong real estate markets can be extremely difficult. The older, smaller, more eccentric spaces that often house cultural uses and small businesses are particularly vulnerable to development-driven displacement. (Seattle Office of Arts and Culture et al. 2017)

It then tackles strategies from small to large that can, over time and with dedicated attention, remediate the tensions between safety and creativity:

Often, we have found, what stands in the way of creating more cultural space is an exhausting series of relatively low hurdles. Minor changes to code, or the removal of antiquated barriers, or the creation of simple new programs and projects, could have enormous benefit and clear the path to cultural space creation, activation, and preservation.

No single action that the City can take will make cultural space invulnerable in an overheated real estate market. At the heart of this report is a list, a menu of options, an extended potential action plan. Our intent is to encourage exploration of, and action on, the items on this list over time. (Seattle Office of Arts and Culture et al. 2017)

Like Baltimore’s Task Force on Safe Arts Spaces, Seattle’s 30 Ideas Plan broke down the big work of creating or defining mechanisms by which safety and creativity could co-exist into categories and working groups. These idea typologies are relevant to not only Seattle, but also planners, artist run spaces, and municipalities across the country when allowing for variation in the local zoning and permitting processes or terminologies. Analysis of and methods for “certifying cultural space, code changes, permitting processes, technical assistance, older buildings, financial tools, public policy, and other ideas (Seattle Office of Arts and Culture et al. 2017)” are relevant across the arts and cultural landscape.

¹⁰ See Appendix E: Recommendations References & Resources for *The CAP Report: 30 Ideas for the Creation, Activation, and Preservation of Cultural Space*.

Unlike Baltimore, Seattle and Oakland's responses to the Ghost Ship and potential evictions led to permanent, long-term initiatives and solutions. West Coast cities like Oakland and Seattle acknowledged that people living and creating at the bottom end of the income spectrum in soaring rental markets are going to continue to seek unconventional housing – not only for affordability reasons, but also to develop community and culture. (H. Smith 2016) On the East Coast, however, few additional protections or systemic-level changes to or acknowledgement of the challenges to the status quo were made. Baltimore City, again the underdog compared to the West Coast in terms of financing and support for the arts, does not even have a city office of arts and culture nor a cabinet level position to represent the arts and cultural sector. New York City at least has robust political representation of the arts. And for tenant protections, has the “Loft Law” in place in which “tenants can register illegal units in commercial buildings with the city in a way that grants them immunity from eviction and starts a process whereby they and the building’s owner work together to make the building safer to live in. (H. Smith 2016) Baltimore City’s response to the Ghost Ship and the evictions at the Bell Foundry is discussed in detail in the following sections.

The Arts Safe Space Task Force

The fire at the Ghost Ship in Oakland, CA started late in the night of December 2nd, 2016, blazing until the next day. On December 5th around 10:00 AM, officials from the Baltimore City Fire Department and the Housing Authority of Baltimore City entered the Bell Foundry on a mission to evict the tenants inside. On December 6th at 11am, the day after the Bell Foundry evictions took place and during the window of time the artist-residents were given to retrieve their belongings, Catherine Pugh was sworn in as Baltimore City's 50th Mayor. (Wenger and Broadwater 2016) One of Pugh's first official public actions as Mayor created the Arts Safe Space Task Force on December 20th, 2016, citing the evictions at the Bell Foundry and the

deadly fire at Oakland's Ghost Ship as inspiration for the initiative. (Broadwater 2016) The impetus behind the Arts Safe Space Task Force and the planning work it executed provide crucial and critical examples of the tensions between safety and creativity in artist run spaces in Baltimore City. Charged with identifying the challenges and solutions to creativity and safety's coexistence, the Arts Safe Space Task Force is an example of how planning efforts regarding arts spaces can excel, and a study in failure. The Arts Safe Space Task Force's work is simultaneously typical - aligning with what other cities did and therefore generalizable - but also specific and unique to Baltimore City's arts, cultural, political, social, and economic landscape. It is due to the unique yet generalizable nature of the case study and the findings that planners can learn from the lessons of the Arts Safe Space Task Force in Baltimore City.

Baltimore is a small town cloaked as a big city, especially in its arts, cultural, and real estate development scenes, or sectors. While publicly announced on December 20th, the formation of the Arts Safe Space Task Force's creation and recruitment spread quickly through a city colloquially known as "Smalltimore"¹¹ prior to the formal announcement. After rumors circulated widely about what the Task Force would be, the formal mandate issued from Mayor Pugh for the Task Force was to:

Create a citywide network of safe, cost-effective, contemporary, living, live/work, studio, and performance spaces for emerging and established artists. The Task Force will integrate the perspectives of artistic, design, development, financial, regulatory, and revitalization experts to develop strategies, identify resources, and propose a programmatic framework that will develop and sustain spaces that protect the safety of artists and patrons, while meeting the logistical and technical interests of today's performers and audiences. (Pugh, Mayor 2017)

The Arts Safe Space Task Force (ASSTF) would include up to 24 members, a group composed of artists, arts service organizations, city officials, and lawyers, architects, real estate developers, and

¹¹ Smalltimore, as defined by urban dictionary, is "a geographic location and a state of mind that generally can be used to reference a small East Coast city, otherwise known as Baltimore. Smalltimore refers both to Baltimore's size and its clique oriented social scene. Smalltimore is a pejorative term that refers to the fact that everyone in Baltimore knows each other." Source: Utz Hayim. "Smalltimore." Urban Dictionary. 10 September 2006.

finance experts. They were assembled to address city officials' concerns about artists living and working in spaces that were not zoned for arts, public assembly, or residential uses: thus, places that could present safety hazards. Pugh selected Jon Laria, partner at the Ballard Spahr law firm, and Frank McNeil, a vice president at PNC Bank, as co-chairmen of the task force. (Broadwater 2016) The composition of the members of the Arts Safe Space Task Force would not only eventually have ramifications for the Task Force's effectiveness as discussed in the findings section of this paper, but also highlighted underlying tensions in the relationships of arts and culture to planning for safe and creative spaces in Baltimore City. Bell Foundry artists, for example, were notably not included.

On December 20, 2017, nearly one year to the day after its formation, Mayor Pugh held a press conference at City Hall with invited representatives of the arts community and the members of the Task Force to release the *Report of the Mayor's Task Force on Safe Arts Space*.¹²

Over the course of their work and to inform their recommendations, the Task Force held a series of meetings, all of which were open to the public (though after the first two, were often late to be announced and not widely publicized) and a large public forum/listening session. For a complete timeline of the Arts Safe Space Task Force's work as it nestled into the events of the Bell Foundry, please see Table 1 on the following page:

¹² Over time, and for the purposes of this thesis, the names of the Task Force shift and are used interchangeably, being referred to as either the Mayor's Task Force on Safe Arts Space or the Arts Safe Space Task Force. The Task Force in their working sessions and report use the later, abbreviating the group's name to the acronym ASSTF. In the media, other shortened versions of the name include but are not limited to Arts Space Task Force or Safe Space Task Force.

<i>Event</i>	<i>Date</i>
Ghost Ship Fire	Friday - Saturday, December 02 - 03, 2016
Bell Foundry Evictions	Monday, December 05, 2016
Bell Foundry Tenants Allowed Entry to Retrieve Belongings between 10 a.m. & 4 p.m.	Tuesday, December 06, 2016
Pugh Sworn in As Mayor	Monday, December 06, 2016
Mayor Announces Creations of Arts Safe Space Task Force at The WindUp Space	Wednesday, December 21, 2016
Press Conference for Arts Safe Space Task Force	Wednesday, December 21, 2016
Mayor Releases Statement on Arts Safe Space Task Force	Wednesday, December 28, 2016
ASSTF Meeting at UB Law School	Tuesday, January 09, 2017
ASSTF Meeting at MICA, 1300 W. Mt. Royal Ave.	Tuesday, January 27, 2017
ASSTF Meeting at MICA, 1300 W. Mt. Royal Ave.	Tuesday, February 7, 2017
ASSTF Meeting: Public Forum at War Memorial Building	Tuesday, February 16, 2017
ASSTF Meeting at The Creative Alliance, 3134 Eastern Ave.	Tuesday, March 07, 2017
ASSTF Meeting at MICA, 1300 W. Mt. Royal Ave.	Tuesday, March 21, 2017
Mayor Signs Executive Order for Moratorium on Evictions of Arts Spaces	Tuesday, April 04, 2017
ASSTF Meeting at MICA, 1300 W. Mt. Royal Ave.	Tuesday, April 04, 2017
Bell Foundry Put Up for Sale	Tuesday, April 11, 2017
ASSTF Meeting Cancelled	Tuesday, April 18, 2017
ASSTF Meeting at MICA, 1300 W. Mt. Royal Ave.	Tuesday, May 02, 2017
ASSTF Meeting Cancelled	Tuesday, May 16, 2017
Anticipated Release of ASSTF Report	June, 2017
Mayor's Press Conference for ASSTF Report at City Hall	Wednesday, December 20, 2017
Task Force Report Released	Wednesday, December 20, 2017
Task Force Implementation/ASTA Pilot	March 2017 - May 2017
Task Force Implementation/ASTA Program	June 2017 - July 2019
Bell Foundry Sold	Monday, December 05, 2018

Table 1: Chronology of Events of the Bell Foundry & the Mayor's Task Force on Safe Arts Space

Not included in the public record are the meetings of the committees, which were neither announced nor discussed. According to the ASSTF report,¹³ after meeting for the first time in

¹³ For more detail, see Appendix C: Report of The Mayor's Task Force for Safe Arts Spaces for the entire *Report of the Mayor's Task Force on Safe Arts Space*.

January 2017, the Task Force resolved to accomplish most of its detail work on these committee levels, coming back together for the monthly meetings to share-out findings with the entire Task Force and members of the public. The three committees or workgroups were Artist Space Needs, chaired by Jeannie Howe of the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance (GBCA), Code and Regulatory Issues, chaired by Amy Bonitz of the Baltimore Arts Realty Corporation (BARCO), and Project Development and Finance, chaired by Dana Johnson of The Reinvestment Fund (TRF). (Pugh, Mayor 2017)

While there was no formal documentation of who served on which committee, some Task Force members spoke publicly about their roles, and sharing spread throughout the arts, culture, and real estate sectors as the Task Force brought others into the workgroup circles for advice. Anecdotally, and from my experiences working with all three committees for the duration of the Task Force and after its sunset, all of the artists convened in the Artists Needs group, while the Code and Regulatory and Development and Finance committees overlapped their work, collaborated intensely, and were predominately steered by Bonitz and Johnston with Frank Lucas, architect, and City officials and staff as close advisors. This inherent divide on the Task Force would exacerbate the tensions between safety and creativity's coexistence that is discussed in the findings section and is evident in the ASSTF Report.

Nonetheless, the committees and the Task Force's contributors collective work is represented in the *Report of the Mayor's Task Force on Safe Arts Space*. A series of specific recommendations attempted to answer Mayor Pugh's charge with recommendation for the short and long term, while keeping the many publics of the arts and cultural ecosystem pacified. High level, conceptual, or systemic recommendations included more outreach to underrepresented arts communities, particularly artists of color, in order to support Baltimore's majority minority population with a focus toward equity. The Report also advised ongoing scrutiny and amendments to Transform Baltimore, the new Baltimore City zoning code which was adopted

after a multi-year process in 2017 after not having major changes to the zoning in the city since the early 1970's.

Pivotaly, the Report recommended amending and piloting new City agency policies and procedures for building and fire code review and inspections, streamlining the permitting process, establishing a system that values social capital and sweat equity, and even creating new or improved governmental agencies or offices to address the specific yet universal needs of the arts and cultural sectors .(Pugh, Mayor 2017). Short-term, immediately implementable recommendations included the creation of an 'ARTeam' and an Arts Space Technical Assistance Program to provide "high quality, readily available technical assistance to artists and arts space developers, owners and operators to navigate a complex regulatory environment." (Pugh, Mayor 2017) The Report details the immediate and pressing need for this technical assistance program and role, as one that would:

- *Develop initial architectural plans that are code-compliant and a budget for related improvements;*
 - *Navigate the City approval and regulatory process including permitting and code enforcement, life safety, and zoning;*
 - *Identify funding sources for improvements; and*
 - *Provide coaching on grant writing and loan applications.*
 - *Create a public education campaign in collaboration with artists to provide awareness and enhance understanding about the ways artists can make their spaces safer and why it is important to do so. It should include technical assistance workshops in areas throughout the city, a how-to guide and safety checklist, and outreach materials, and should engage artists to develop outreach tools to reach other artists;*
 - *Work with the City to develop and publish a protocol that builds on the Mayor's Executive Order for City response to DIY artist spaces;*
 - *And should have a track record of professional expertise in the development of art spaces and strong working relationships with government agencies, as well as a history of connections to artists and experience working with underserved communities, as well as demonstrated accountability to the artist community.*
- (Pugh, Mayor 2017)

I personally developed, piloted, and filled this need as the only person in a full-time position dedicated to implementing the Task Force report's recommendations from 2017-2019, when the Arts Space Technical Assistance (ASTA) program shuttered. The creation of the ASTA program would ensure the continued efforts initiated by the Arts Safe Space Task Force were sustained outside of the city governance to ensure continuity across administrations. The ASTA program

would work closely with a new, proposed City agency representative or staff member who would function as the City’s “point person” or “ombudsman” for systemic arts related issues in need of diagnosis or addressing .(Pugh, Mayor 2017). Additional short term recommendation included making vacant or underutilized city-owned properties available to artists for use as arts spaces (reusing vacant or recently shuttered public schools was suggested), increasing or establishing funding opportunities for not only large-scale capital improvements in arts and cultural spaces but also emergency small-scale interventions that would increase life safety and code compliance in illegal or underground spaces, and implementing the recommendations of an earlier mayoral report, the Mayor’s Working Group on Arts and Entertainment Districts of 2015.¹⁴ (Pugh, Mayor 2017)

The Report was met with skepticism and frustration among many, despite anecdotal support for many of its recommendations by city agencies and constituents. Its late release, after the anniversary of the Bell Foundry evictions, many months after the publicly announced and anticipated deadline of June 2017, was inauspicious. Those in the Baltimore arts and culture landscape were doubtful when they finally read the *Report of the Task Force on Safe Arts Space*. Would the recommendations of the Task Force serve those most in need?? Would this help any artists at all?

Baltimore’s Two Baltimores: The Black Butterfly versus the White L, Charm City versus Bodymore & The Bell Foundry’s Place In-Between

While Baltimore is a majority-minority city, it has a reputation of being not one collective place, but rather two Baltimores – a city of the haves, and a city of the have-nots. In 1987, Marc V. Levine laid the groundwork for this divisional understanding of Baltimore, and it has remained

¹⁴ I served on the Mayor’s Working Group for Arts and Entertainment Districts and contributed to writing this 2015 report alongside friend and Weitzman Historic Preservation alum Rebecca Cordes Chan.

pervasive ever since his publication of *Downtown Redevelopment as an Urban Growth Strategy: A Critical Appraisal of the Baltimore Renaissance* in the *Journal of Urban Affairs*. Levine's Baltimore division is due to a development mode which he names "the Baltimore strategy," that, he says, "has generated uneven patterns of growth and exacerbated urban dualism Levine." Levine cites the dominance of business over public-private partnerships, the absence of linkages between downtown development and fringe marginalized areas, and the pitfalls of building an economy on services and tourism as causal to why,

...Baltimore has become "two cities": a city of developers, suburban professionals, and "back-to-the-city" gentry who have ridden the downtown revival to handsome profits, good jobs, and conspicuous consumption; and a city of impoverished blacks and displaced manufacturing workers, who continue to suffer from shrinking economic opportunities, declining public services, and neighborhood distress. (Levine 1987)

Local scholars Mary Rizzo in *Come and Be Shocked: Baltimore Beyond John Waters and The Wire* and Dr. Lawrence T. Brown in *The Black Butterfly: The Harmful Politics of Race and Space in America* discuss these two Baltimores in their recent publications. Little has changed in mending the divide in the nearly 40 years since Levine's opus. To Brown, the city is divided between "the White L and the Black Butterfly, (Brown 2021);" Rizzo acknowledges the divide as between "Charm City and Bodymore (Rizzo 2020)."

Rizzo uses the lens of arts and culture produced in or about Baltimore to show the statistical distinctions between Charm City and Bodymore, emphasizing how 'charm' is racialized. "If Charm City is fun, kitschy and white" – defined by white ethnic neighborhoods that largely ignore the Black population – "Bodymore is dangerous, deadly, and Black. (Rizzo 2020)" Rizzo also directly implicates artists and cultural products in perpetuating this divide; as they continue portraying a Baltimore with which they are familiar, they reinforce segregation. Rizzo interrogates creativity and its relationship to power and racial segregation. Culture shapes place, place shapes culture:

Charm City and Bodymore are ideas that have shaped the segregation, urban renewal, and activism that historians of Baltimore have studied. Understanding how a film or a TV show shapes and

reflects society requires more than examining its depiction of a place. We must understand the political economy by asking, Who gets to produce culture? Who has access to funding? Whose work is circulated? How does the meaning of a text change as it circulates? Culture is a space of struggle over power, politics, and place. (Rizzo 2020)

This thesis interrogates the tensions between safety and creativity in Baltimore City, but these tensions – including racial segregation, extreme inequitable distribution of resources, and cultural naval-gazing – are not unique to Baltimore. “Cultural representations are intended to work at different scales. Sometimes the city represents only itself. More often, though, the city is a stand in for all cities of a certain type.” (Rizzo 2020) Baltimore is uniquely Baltimore, and its issues are distinct. It can, however, serve as a case study for other cities, for other planners; as Rizzo says – it can be a stand-in for all cities.

Demographics in Baltimore at the launch of the Task Force and continuing into 2023 support vernacular, professional, and academic claims to Baltimore’s disparity. These divisions are not just internal. Baltimore, the largest city in Maryland, is very different from the rest of the state. Looking back in time for context, The Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance data for 2017 indicated a stark disparity between the city and its surroundings. With approximately 620,961 residents in 2017, census-based indicators showed that Baltimore’s constituents are poorer and less well educated than Maryland as a whole. Financial and educational disadvantages are exacerbated by racial and income segregation despite 64% of Baltimore’s population being African American. In 2017, Baltimore’s median household income was \$38,346, its unemployment rate neared 13%, and almost 25% of its families with children were living in poverty. Nearly a third of Baltimore’s working population only had a high school degree. (BNIA and UB 2017)

The Station North Arts and Entertainment District (Station North or SNAED), a community, economic, and cultural development program connects Baltimore City and the Bell Foundry’s Greenmount West neighborhood to the rest of the state. Established in 2002, Station North was one of the first Maryland Arts and Entertainment (A&E) Districts in the state and the

first in Baltimore City. (“District History” n.d.) Established by area artists in partnership with local anchor institutions and community activists, Station North has since its inception been a regional and nationwide example of grassroots arts and cultural initiatives. (Goethe Institut 2014) Located in Central Baltimore including the intersection of Charles Street and North Avenue – Baltimore’s *cardo* and *decumanus* – Station North spans the historic neighborhoods of Barclay and Charles North in addition to Greenmount West. Meghan Ashlin Rich examined the demographics of Station North in her 2019 article, *‘Artists are a tool for gentrification’: Maintaining Artists and Creative Production in Arts Districts*. The following is representative of the Bell Foundry’s immediate surrounds:

Using the most recently available U.S. Census data from the 2015 American Community Survey, the main census tract included in Station North has a population of 2244 people, a median household income of \$32,596 (in comparison to \$74,551 for Maryland), and a population that is 62.3% African-American, 29.9% white, 2.8% Asian, and 2.9% Latino/a. Between 2000 and 2010, there were major changes in the residential makeup of the neighborhood, with a 5% increase in population, which includes an astounding 332.7% increase in white population and a 48.5% increase in number of households. Between 2010 and 2015, the population has continued to grow in this neighborhood, most likely due to new or rehabilitated rental housing developments, with a 28.2% increase in total population and a 44.7% increase in white population. Interestingly, the black population stopped declining in this period, increasing by the same number of people as the white population. In comparison to Station North, Baltimore City has a population of 614,664 (2016 estimate, a loss of 1% since 2010), and is 62.9% African-American, 31.7% white, 2.8% Asian, and 4.8% Latino/a (2015 population estimate. (Rich 2017)

In *The Black Butterfly*, Dr. Lawrence Brown highlights Station North as a rapidly gentrifying area in Baltimore City with a considerable loss of the Black population between 2000 and 2010.

(Brown 2021) In 2019, Baltimore was “ranked sixth nationally in intensity of gentrification.”¹⁵

¹⁵ Dr. Brown writes of Station North starting with citing a 1978 interview with economist and scholar Homer Favor of Baltimore’s Morgan State University:

“There is some question about who the city is being revitalized for...It seems to me that the city has indicated that it will attempt to solve the city’s problems by bringing in a middle class and upper middle class privileged – basically whites and dislocating the Blacks who are here and then viewing this transformation as a major accomplishment.”

Favor’s assessment would prove prophetic. A March 2019 study found Baltimore ranked sixth nationally in intensity of gentrification (measured by eligible census tracts gentrified) and seventh nationally in Black population loss in census tracts experiencing gentrification between 2000 and 2010. Study maps show gentrification taking place in Station North and Greenmount West in Central Baltimore near the Maryland Institute College of Art... (Brown 2021)

(Brown 2021)” Rich also attempts to map arts and cultural spaces of note in Station North’s rapidly changing terrain in 2016, but at the time of her publication and writing, the Bell Foundry is notably absent. The following map is borrowed from Rich and annotated to include the Bell Foundry’s location (See Figure 1 below).

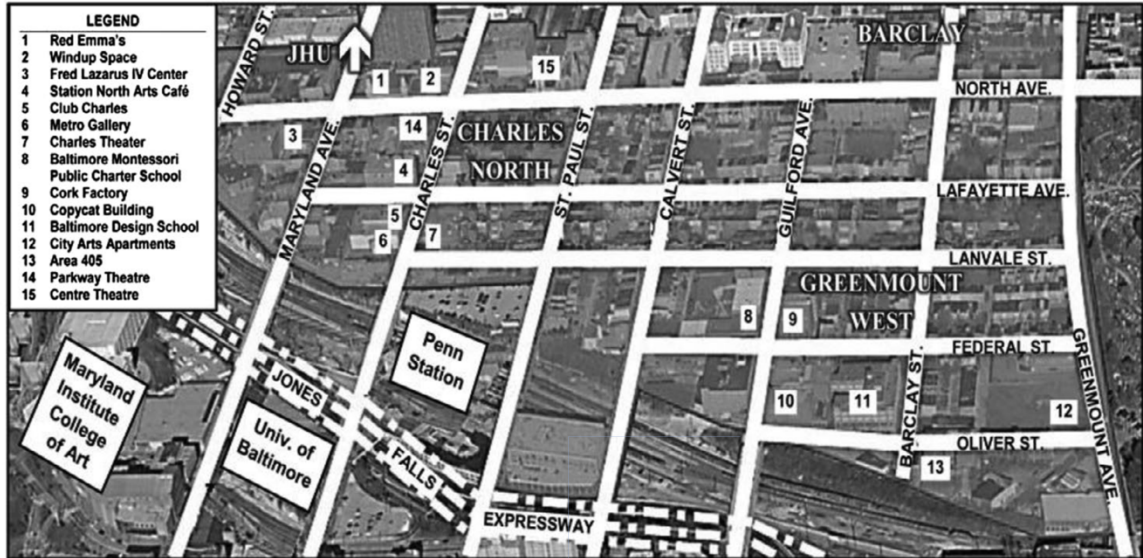


Figure 1: Rich & Tsitsos 2016 Map of Station North A&E District Arts and Cultural Points of Interest with Annotation indicating the location of the Bell Foundry (Rich and Tsitsos 2016)

As shown in the following sections, the Station North Arts and Entertainment District was both a blessing and a threat to the Bell Foundry. As Station North succeeded in generating interest and investment in formerly disinvested neighborhoods within and surrounding its boundaries, the artist population there – like the Bell Foundry’s tenants - was finding it harder and harder to claim or keep territory to live and work in the district as it quickly gentrified.

At the Geographic Heart of the City, The Bell Foundry's Place In-Between

1539 Calvert Street, Baltimore, Maryland 21202, otherwise known as The Bell Foundry, is a 13,000 square foot building (See Figure 2 below) which housed artists, a theatre group (BROS), and an underground performance space until city officials shuttered its unofficial use, citing major code and life safety violations. The building, located on the corner of the intersection of North Calvert and East Federal Streets, occupies a 0.31 acre site which includes a .25 acre parking lot. (The Bell Foundry tenants had converted this lot into a skatepark and garden.) As



Figure 2: Person and Georgia in front of the Bell Foundry for Baltimore City Paper's cover story "Abused & Tired," March 8, 2017. (Photo by City Paper) (Callahan and Kirkman 2017)

noted, the site is in the Greenmount West neighborhood, part of the Station North Arts and Entertainment District, just a few blocks southeast of Penn Station and the geographic center of Baltimore City.

At the time of the Bell Foundry Evictions, Katy Byrne - deputy assistant commissioner for litigation in the city housing department's permits and code enforcement division said there were two valid permits at the Bell Foundry: one, issued in 2009, for "artisan and craft work" on the first floor, and a second, issued in 2010, for the same kind of work on portions of the second floor. The building, however, had never received a permit as living space. (Rector 2016) Byrne explained to *Baltimore Sun* reporter Kevin Rector at the time of the evictions,

Unlike with residential and multifamily dwelling permits, such artisan and craft work permits do not require annual inspections ... and the Bell Foundry had not been inspected since the 2010 permit was issued. At that time, it was up to code for its permitted uses. ... The housing department had received complaints about the Bell Foundry in the intervening years, but only regarding exterior issues such as trash, graffiti and weeds[.] (Rector 2016)

Due to the housing and life safety violations, the Bell Foundry tenants were evicted, and the building was condemned. With the building vacated, Byrne said her department's "second order of business" would be to work with the building's owners to see if certain spaces in the building — such as the Baltimore Rock Opera Society's first-floor space — could be brought up to code and reopened quickly. (Rector 2016)

Three individuals owned the Bell Foundry property in 2016 at the time of the evictions. Owner Jeremy Landsman was a notorious Baltimore real estate developer who, in 2014, (V. Smith 2017) “pled guilty in the Sonar weed conspiracy case (admitting to laundering money and possessing with intent to distribute 100 kilograms or more of pot; several of the properties he owned in the city, though not the Bell Foundry, figured into the case).” (Soderberg 2016) The other two owners were husband and wife, and fixtures in Baltimore’s community development

circles. Joseph (Joe) McNeely – a major cheerleader for the establishment of the Station North Arts and Entertainment District and Central Baltimore - had recently retired from Central Baltimore Partnership (a CDC) in order to care for his wife. Patricia (Pat) Massey, formerly of the Baltimore Housing Partnership and McNeely's wife, had been recovering from a traumatic brain injury at the time of the evictions and has since passed away. (Soderberg 2016) Since 2010, under their ownership, the Bell Foundry became a known underground arts space for artists, musicians, and performers – particularly those whom were very much at the center of Baltimore’s Black avant-garde (Soderberg 2016) to work, skill-share, and experiment. On December 7, 2016, the day after the Bell Foundry tenants were allowed back into the building to remove their belongings, McNeely told the *Real News Network*:

My wife and I and our partner Jerry are the owners of Bell Foundry. We were committed to making that building a vital part of the Station in regards to [the] entertainment district. We have leased the building to two different tenants, one for the Baltimore Rock Opera Society and the other for individual studios. We are working with the tenants who want to come back, to determine what use they want to put to the space and to see that the conditions can be met by a combination of our efforts and their efforts meets the requirements and makes the requirement for the city for those uses. The city is being very collaborative with their time and expertise but they’re being very adamant about the safety conditions that they require in the building. (TRNN 2016)

At the time of the 2016 condemnation, rumors about redevelopment floated among the artists who had lived there. A Facebook statement from “The Bell Foundry Family” acknowledged as much: “Renewal was not an impossibility, but was doubtful from both the property owners, and lease holders’ perspectives,” it read. “We remained in the space for quite some time, through multiple lease terms, and strove for the highest level of autonomy throughout.” (B. W. and E. McLeod 2018; Soderberg 2016) The building had seen much change over the years, taking its name from the historic McShane Bell Foundry, founded in 1856. (Pousson n.d.) In 1979, the McShane Bell Foundry moved to the suburbs surrounding Baltimore City, and the building stayed mostly vacant until the artists came in 2010. (Pousson n.d.)

Zahlco Development purchased the property nearly two years-to-the-day after the evictions in December 2018 with plans to redevelop the site as an “urban living complex.” The

building was put up for sale with its surrounding .31-acre lot in April 2017 for \$1 million (later lowered to \$899,000). (B. W. and E. McLeod 2018) Landsman said of the sale to Zahlco:

We're happy that these guys are gonna redevelop the site and continue to grow the neighborhood and the city. We're happy that it's the best thing for the city, and Baltimore needs good things happening. Baltimore doesn't need people sitting on buildings. We were really happy that we are able to get all the partners to agree to move the asset to somebody who's going to do something with it immediately. They've told me what they're going to do is apartments and keep the existing building. (B. W. and E. McLeod 2018)

It was surprising to many of the interviewees in retrospect, that it took two years to find a purchaser of the Bell Foundry property, as urban revitalization and new development in Central Baltimore and large transformative projects – like the redevelopment of Penn Station – was soaring and continues to occur.

Station North had seen flurry of arts-oriented development around the time of the evictions, including Open Works, City Arts I and II, and the Nelson Kohl Apartment Building. Rich charted some of the major developments and closures in Station North in the years surrounding the Bell Foundry evictions in 2017. See Table 2: Table 1: List of Major Developments and Closures in Station North Arts & Entertainment District, 2007-2018 (Rich 2017.) regarding arts spaces and gentrification below for more detail.

Table 2. List of major developments and closures in Station North Arts & Entertainment District, 2007–2018.

Year	Name	Description
<i>Openings</i>		
2007	Baltimore Post Office – ‘Railway Lofts’	Repurposed post office; apartments and office space
2008, ongoing project	North Ave. Market Building	Rehabilitated portions of building, includes Red Emma’s (collectivist bookstore and café) and a few businesses
2008	Baltimore Montessori Public Charter School	Rehabilitated public school building for new charter school
2010	City Arts I	New build; 69-unit below market-rate artist housing
2012	Fred Lazarus IV Center	Repurposed industrial building; MICA graduate studio center/classrooms
2013	Baltimore Design School	Repurposed industrial building; public middle/high school
2013	The Chesapeake Building	Rehabilitated restaurant/offices
2015	Centre Theatre	Rehabilitated Art Deco theater/offices/JHU & MICA Film Studios
2016	City Arts II	New build; 60-unit below market-rate artist housing
2016	Motor House	Repurposed industrial building; artist studios/offices/performance space
2016	Open Works	Repurposed industrial building; maker space
2017	Parkway Theatre	Rehabilitated Beaux-Arts theater/Maryland Film Festival home
2018 (anticipated)	Nelson Kohn Apartment Building	New build: High rise apartment building with 103 units, market rate
<i>Closures (years open)</i>		
2006 (7 years)	American Dime Museum	Sideshow museum, now closed
2012 (7 years)	Load of Fun	Live/work artist space, now The Motor House
2015 (13 years)	Charm City Art Space	Punk collective and performance space, now tattoo studio
2015 (25 years)	Hour Haus	Recording and rehearsal music space, now offices
2016 (10 years)	Bell Foundry	Live/work artist space, now partially condemned
2017 (6 years)	Liam Flynn’s Ale House	Tavern and musical performance space in North Ave. Market, now closed

Table 2: Table 1: List of Major Developments and Closures in Station North Arts & Entertainment District, 2007-2018 (Rich 2017.)

As shown later in the discussion regarding the tensions between safety and creativity, much of this new redevelopment and urban revitalization activity increased the tensions as the neighborhood gentrified. Que Pequeño, a former Bell Foundry tenant, points out that the new projects were not designed for people like him and his friends. (Campbell 2017) Central Baltimore falls on the inner cusp of where the White L meets the Black Butterfly, and the new versus old clashed in the rapid redevelopment of Station North, highlighting the real and perceived perpetual divides between white and Black and the have/have-nots in Baltimore. There was some optimism about the future, as Aran Keating, Director of the Baltimore Rock Opera Society pointed out after being displaced during the eviction at the Bell Foundry,

In a city full of vacant buildings, it’s inexcusable to me to know that there’s resources the city isn’t using, resources that could be benefiting the community, could be advancing the cause of the city, which is to put together a livable awesome space. There [should be] some way we can take the spaces that

are sitting empty, get them safe enough for artists to inhabit them, set them up with regular inspections. You give an artist something for free, they will take maximum advantage of it. (Kaufman 2017)

Artists making stuff, making space and place, taking maximum advantage of anything and everything they could scrounge together, would continue to happen in Baltimore, although many of those in the countercultural scene were forced further underground in the wake of the tragedies of the Ghost Ship and the Bell Foundry.

Baltimore City's Aboveground Arts Underground

Baltimore remains an underdog of cities, and the pain of its division into two persists. However, it is still producing culture that is nationally if not globally renowned. Some recent examples of prominent cultural producers from Baltimore include Future Islands (see image to the right depicting *Game of Thrones* actor Rory McCann proudly wearing a Future Islands t-shirt designed by local graphic designer Nolan Strals), the Wham City collective, TT the Artist's *Dark City* documentary on HBO, and of course, the internationally celebrated portrait of Michelle Obama painted by Amy Sherald, which was made in a studio in Station North just a few blocks from the



N.A. Strals

19h · 🧑



Dude from *Game of Thrones* wearing my newest Future Islands shirt design. Apparently he's a big fan of the band!



Figure 3: *Game of Thrones* actor Rory McCann proudly wearing a Future Islands t-shirt designed by local graphic designer Nolan Strals (Strals 2022)

Bell Foundry. (See Figure 4.) As Mary Rizzo writes in *Come and Be Shocked, Baltimore Beyond John Waters and The Wire*,

Baltimore's impact on culture has been mostly ignored by scholars even though the city, through figures like John Waters, Anne Tyler, Barry Levinson, Laura Lippman, Charles S Dutton, and David Simon, has become nationally recognizable. These representations have affected not only Baltimore itself but how we understand issues like urban governance (Simon), queerness (Waters), and race and ethnicity (Simon and Levinson). Several universities... have offered courses on The Wire 2002 to 2008, an HBO drama about Baltimore's drug trade, as a window into deindustrialization, the criminal justice system, and education. Representations of Baltimore shape how we think about cities everywhere. (Rizzo 2020)

In addition to impacting Baltimore's self-perception and external representation, all of these artists mentioned 'came up' in illegal or quasi legal spaces like that which we are discussing in this paper. How Baltimore views its artists and artist run space, as Rizzo elucidates, shapes how cities think everywhere. It is Baltimore's celebration of, and simultaneous reliance on, the underground that adds to the layers of complexities of both preserving and planning for spaces that are both creative and safe in an underfunded, deeply divided city.



Figure 4: Amy Sherald painting Michelle Obama's portrait in her studio at the Motorhouse and the completed portrait on display (BARCO, Bonitz and Glebes 2018-2019)

In the decades leading up to the Bell Foundry evictions, Baltimore City had employed a reactionary methodology in planning for, regulating, or enabling art spaces while increasing the use and awareness of said spaces. Legislation, policy, and buildings themselves had been developed as reactions to catastrophes or nuisance complaints, rather than constructing holistic and varied proactive strategies to support the arts and cultural ecosystem upon which the city and its residents rely. In 2017, a *City Paper* cover story offered the following as a case study of transformation from underground to aboveground:

Motor House is a fascinating example of how above ground spaces still offer plurality to the arts scene, but it also offers up a look at how the task force might handle DIY space. Load Of Fun closed in 2013 after an anonymous 311 complaint led the city to come and inspect the building and declare that it wasn't in compliance with "use and occupancy" zoning.

That same year, the building was purchased by BARCO Back in 2014, Sherwin Mark, who owned the building when it went by Load Of Fun, said this to City Paper about the 2013 sale of the building: "For whatever nefarious reason, Load Of Fun was destroyed by the city while so many much more non-compliant buildings in the city continue to be supported and publicized by the very organizations that took advantage of Load Of Fun and its artists."

What then is underground, and what does it mean to be underground in Baltimore City?

While planning literature investigating the underground is largely nonexistent, scholars from other disciplines debate the exact meaning of being underground while largely agreeing that – like creative placemaking – it is a state of being defined by what it is not, always positioned counter to a dominant power. The underground is not aboveground, not mainstream, not instantly accessible, not the status quo, not dominant. The underground is often the Avant Garde and has audiences, but functions clandestinely. Cynthia and Michael Stohl describe the clandestine nature and affiliations of the underground as:

... composed of groups of people who keep their affiliations secret and conceal internal and external organizational activities. They have been variously described as underground organizations, secret societies, illicit or dark networks, enclaves, black markets, backstreet businesses, anonymous agencies, gangs, covert collectives, hidden organizations, and shadow states. Many of these descriptors are laden with negative connotations; the terms "clandestine" or "hidden" ... denote any sort of organizing that is intentionally shrouded from view. (Stohl and Stohl 2016)

Mihaela Manolache of the University of Nottingham in the United Kingdom celebrates the underground – its history and present. The underground is a culture that is evolving, that has not yet become mainstream, but as its loyal followers grow, can transform from subculture (counterculture) to culture-at-large (mainstream). To some extent, the underground subculture is always illegal or unsanctioned and must remain hidden in order to survive. (Manolache 2022)

The underground is not a new phenomenon as there has been something to exist against since the dawn of culture. Some scholars date the counterculture’s historical origins to Jesus (Manolache), to cave paintings (Rozario), or to the Knights Templar of the 12th century (Stohl and Stohl).

Manolache notes how the association and meaning of the underground had shifted over time:

In 1953 scholars attested the use of underground as reference to specific subcultures from WWII. During the war there were several resistance movements against German expansion generally called underground. It has remained unmodified until today. As well, all the political, social and cultural counter-movements born later, beginning with the 60s were denominated as underground groups. Since then, the term has designated various subcultures such as mod culture, hippie culture, punk rock culture, techno music/rave culture and underground hip hop and many others. ... The desire of people to express themselves in a counter-way as opposed to the majority will never cease to exist. (Manolache 2022)

Steven Heller of the School of Visual Arts aligns with Manolache’s use and understanding of the perpetuity of the underground and adds a layer of complexity, tracing its cooption or evolution from outsider to mainstream. “Outsiders are, after all, invariably marginalized until the mainstream celebrates them as unsung geniuses,” he notes. (Heller 2008)

Heller uses the 1960’s psychedelic movement as an example. Psychedelia emerged from a group that “shared proclivities” for “sex, drugs, and anarchic behavior.” All interests that were direct threats to the mainstream, often literally against the law. Through this rapidly growing countercultural movement – often associated and popularized by hippies like the Beat poets –

...kindred visual artists, musicians and designers developed means of expression that helped define the culture’s distinct characteristics. Psychedelic art was a distinct vocabulary, influenced by earlier graphic idioms, that overturned the rigid rules of clarity and legibility put forth by the once avant-garde Moderns. Through its very raunchiness it manifested the ideals of youth culture. For a brief time it was decidedly a shock to the system. But as it gained popularity, ... it turned into a code easily co-opted by marketers. (Heller 2008)

As the underground becomes aboveground, it loses its countercultural territory, evolving or co-opted as a recognized subculture or into mainstream culture. Much like the process of gentrification, anti-establishments are pushed out, and move to alternate undergrounds. Between dominant narratives and subversive currents of the underground, a paradox emerges under hypercapitalism¹⁶ as corporate and governmental development interests become adept at appropriating the language, if not the ethos, of underground culture to promote consumerism. This is Florida's *Rise of the Creative Class* theory in practice. Kevin Rozario of Smith College details how underground arts spaces exist as:

...a privileged space for imagining alternatives to a media-driven mainstream culture that instructed society in 'proper' ways of behaving... You have underground cinema and underground poetry; it's a place you go to get away from dominant society. You go into a basement to watch a movie that's going to 'blow your mind' so you can think in new and fresh ways. ...

To go underground is to force a break with the conventional, the normal, the dominant, and to experiment in ways that allow for personal and social transformation. (Goldscheider 2015)

However, he notes, much like artist run spaces in gentrifying neighborhoods, like the Bell Foundry in Station North, "underground cultures not only get annexed by capitalism but become a fuel for capitalism."

The Baltimore arts underground is, essentially, secret spaces and cultural communities hiding in plain view. While there is a permitting process for arts spaces in Baltimore to become legal and sanctioned, the path to code compliance is often unattainable for most cultural practitioners and being a mainstream organization inherently undermines being countercultural. Baltimore's cultural identity is rooted in its underground sentiment. On any given week, local

¹⁶ Marina Vujonic's "Hypercapitalism" defines the term as:

Hypercapitalism is a term used by Marxist scholars, in their continuing critique of political economy, to depict a relatively new form of capitalistic social organization marked by the speed and intensity of global flows that include exchange of both material and immaterial goods, people, and information. Hypercapitalism, sometimes referred to as corporate capitalism, is blamed by critical scholars for causing misbalance and fragmentation of social life by allowing commercial or business interests to penetrate every aspect of human experience. In other words, critical scholars believe that once-separate spheres of culture and commerce now overlap and, in return, culture and the way of life in a hypercapitalist society becomes subsumed by the commercial sphere. In addition, critical scholars believe that this new type of capitalist system has moved toward an extreme laissez-faire capitalism that is marked by greed, selfishness, destruction, wars, and exploitation. (Vujnovic 2012)

music or visual arts fans can find a handful of shows at these underground – or sometimes called ‘DIY’ for ‘Do-It-Yourself’ - venues or galleries. These makeshift spaces exist in nearly every American city, as shown in the nationwide ripple effects of the fire at the Ghost Ship. Journalist Kevin Rector explains more about Baltimore’s underground arts spaces in the wake of the Bell Foundry evictions:

On the outside, they appear as old warehouses and rowhomes. Inside, they are hubs of activity for artists of all disciplines. Artists, who pay cheap rent, use the same space to display their work, from art galleries and fashion shows to theater performances and concerts.

...They are often born out of creativity and necessity, because artists — often making little money from their crafts — can't afford much else. Renting both housing and a separate studio is out of the question for many, so they seek out cheaper options like the Bell Foundry, even though its spaces aren't permitted for residential living. Yet many say these spaces are vital because they foster creativity for artists operating on the fringes. The environment of creative types living and working together often leads to great results... These spaces can promote relaxation and meditation, and other times, attract sweat-drenched audiences and raucous mosh pits.

Shows are open to the public, and usually advertised via social media with promotional fliers that lack addresses because too much publicity can lead to intervention from city bureaucrats.

Baltimore's venues — from tiny living rooms and basements to converted warehouse spaces, with names like Soft House, Lucky Day and Bahamas — have come and gone... (Case and Rector 2016b)

These spaces, while productive, are rife with tensions between safety and creativity, a coexistence acknowledged even by the artists who run and reside in them. “The allure of that kind of atmosphere can sometimes overshadow safety concerns, even if people are careful,” said Carly Ptak, who co-ran a now-defunct DIY space in West Baltimore called Tarantula Hill for years. (Case and Rector 2016b) "It's every day living it, and every day assessing what your ideals are and how you are interacting with society and whether it conforms to your personal ideals," Ptak said. "Sometimes it's worth being unsafe rather than living in what passes for safe but is really dead inside." (Case and Rector 2016b) The image below taken by Jessie Delaplaine, a member of the Baltimore Rock Opera Society, on December 7th, 2016, at the Bell Foundry days after the

evictions exemplifies this ethos (See Figure 5).

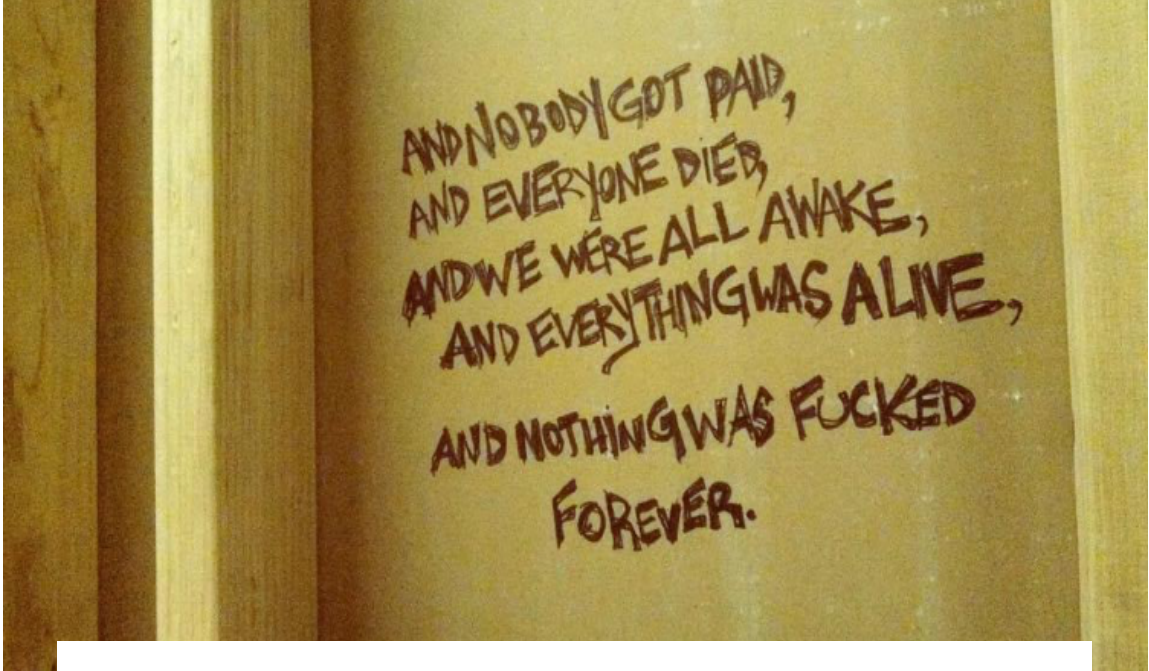


Figure 5: Photograph of graffiti on a stud wall inside the Bell Foundry, December 7th, 2016. (Delaplaine 2016)

tion
for arts and culture, music in particular—known around the world, even dubbed “best scene” by *Rolling Stone* in 2008 (Sessa 2008)—would not exist. “There’s never not going to be a class of people that need to create and will. There’s never going to be a lack of unused space,” said Dan Deacon, an electronic musician and member of the Arts Safe Space Task Force who spent the early half of his career playing such spaces. “These spots are going to continue to pop up and flourish and grow, and like anything beautiful, authority will see it as a weed and try to cut it.” (Case and Rector 2016b) This paper explores the impact and relevance of the underground on planning with and for spaces of arts and culture, particularly the counterculture, as it relates to safety and creativity in artist run spaces.

Part 02: Literature Review

The following literature review provides scholarly context to the difficulty in defining creativity and valuing the intangible contributions of the arts and cultural sectors. (Markusen 2006; Florida 2012; Peck 2005) Aligning with the dominant theory that artists are part of the gentrification, the thesis enters into the debate regarding artists role in neighborhood change. (Zukin 2014; Shkuda 2016; Rich 2017; Rich and Tsitsos 2016). Creative placemaking is offered as a potential beginning for planners to identify with and embrace artist run spaces and the difficulty with defining a creative cultural underground. (Grodach 2011; Bates et al. 2018; Zitcer 2020; Stern and Seifert 2007) These foundational scholars establish the framework for the further discussion in the findings and recommendations sections of this work.

While there is extensive literature around using artists and their role in community and economic development - and their real or perceived role in gentrification and neighborhood change - little focus has been given directly to Baltimore or to the artist spaces themselves. Creativity is hard to define as Markusen and Peck point out in their scathing critiques of Florida's *Rise of the Creative Class*, and the qualitative and quantitative methods employed by Stern and Seifert focused primarily on Philadelphia. Without additional funding and support, other cities cannot duplicate their methods or practice. Perhaps then, creative placemaking in the discourse and acceptability of the practice is the best starting point that we have as planners to enter into the debate of artist run spaces and their influence.

Although Baltimore City has historically celebrated its vibrant arts community, embracing contemporary notions of the “creative class” as vital to the City’s growth and development, planners and practitioners across the wider field have not always recognized the importance of arts and culture to their work, nor have they acknowledged an essential tension between *safety* and *creativity* influence the cultural and economic ecosystem at large. Are these two conditions even reconcilable or compatible in the first place?

The literature herein only flows in one direction. Artists and creatives have had access to the planning literature, especially as *The Rise of the Creative Class* became a pop phenomenon (Peck 2005), but planning scholars and practitioners do not traverse the professional nor the creative work of artists in their work on arts and culture. Speaking according to the classist distinctions in the relationship between planning and artist spaces, therefore, the scholarship only goes downhill. Who benefits from this unequal distribution of intellectual wealth? The title of this thesis is a critique of Florida's creative class as economic value mentality – “gonna do it any way, even if it doesn't pay , (Flock of Dimes and Sylvan Ezzo 2021).” Where does an artist class culture end and a tech bro startup culture begin? Even Markusen and Peck, Stern and Seifert don't cite the leading artist or art historical literature on artist run spaces. It is only perhaps through the placemaking lens, or when artist-run spaces inspire entrepreneurship, that the planning lexicon acknowledges or begins to broach the divide between *using* the arts and artists, and *crediting* artists and the arts for creating cultural-*to-commercial* hubs. It is only through the subsequent arts-to-economy pathway that artist-run spaces are acknowledged as a core and correlating participant, legitimate within the Planning discipline.

Likewise, Megan Ashlin Rich and other emerging scholars who look at the intersection of arts and gentrification only see the value of the arts when the status quo breaks. Akin to Heidegger's observation that we don't appreciate the hammer until the hammer breaks (Harman 2012), we don't appreciate the arts and arts practitioners until they have been displaced or until their building catches fire. Other sources refer more generally to the connection of arts-oriented development in urban areas and the role of creative placemaking in planning with and for artists, which will also be covered in the literature review. This thesis builds upon the connection made by these authors and furthers the topic by investigating the success of planning processes during Baltimore City's post-Ghost Ship decade. Overwhelmingly, planners see creativity in purely utilitarian terms.

As this paper seeks to understand *how* and *if* creativity and safety can coexist, the following literature review acknowledges differences in the way authors understand how and why artist run spaces come to be in the first place. This often happens in a social, economic, and political atmosphere of protest. Varying mechanisms are used to measure or value artists by the planning professionals and other ‘experts.’ Recognizing this imbalanced power dynamic, the following literature is reviewed with special attention to the subjectivity of the artists – the non-dominant authority of their own domain when in the hands of planning scholars. Artists’ vernacular or synchronous principles overlap with the literature, providing a greater understanding of how commonalities might be utilized for the benefit of planning with and for arts and culture in the findings section. Perhaps planners, policymakers, artists, and academics alike can create positive outcomes by understanding the gaps in safety and creativity’s coexistence and thereby leverage each other’s strengths and agencies to collectively sustain the cultural ecosystem.

Currently undervalued assets but ensnared in the gentrification debate, arts and cultural producers and their often-illegal self-organized spaces in Baltimore City and elsewhere are often the launchpads of the City’s identity and are vital to the longevity of economic and community growth and sustainability. The following literature review explores various intersections and tensions, scholarly discourse includes many different ways to recognize the value produced by artists and artist run spaces.

Literature Review: Bucket 01 – Gentrification and the Artists

There is an underlying relationship between culture and the economy that is reflected by investments in transforming inner-city properties that were derelict into artistic enclaves. (Jackson

2012; Grodach 2011; Markusen and Johnson 2006; Gadwa, Markusen, and Walton, n.d.) While the literature on the intersections of arts, culture and community and economic development are vast – and tend to tie into Richard Florida’s *Rise of the Creative Class* (Florida 2012) or David Harvey’s *From Managerialism to Entrepreneurialism: The Transformation in Urban Governance in Late Capitalism* (Harvey 2020) – a subtopic of the economic development sources in the existing literature specifically link gentrification to arts spaces. This section covers several topics and debates related to the role of artists in the process of gentrification. This section on gentrification and the arts lays the groundwork for the analysis of the findings that reveal a tension between safety and creativity. Gentrification is a deeply relevant issue in Baltimore City’s artist run spaces, connecting this research to planning scholarship and practice writ large. This thesis folds Baltimore City’s artists and artist run spaces, in particular the Bell Foundry, snugly into this established and well-worn gentrification process as an exemplar.

Throughout the world, industrial neighborhoods and their historic buildings are transformed by artists and marginalized communities moving in. Planners and sociologists have studied this succession – from industrial to arts to bohemian-inspired middle and upper class – since the 1960’s, placing artists and marginalized communities as unwitting harbingers of the gentrification process that paradoxically later displaces them. (Levine 1987; Glass 1964; Ley 1996; Cameron and Coaffee 2005) Seminal planning scholarship includes Sharon Zukin’s *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* on warehouse living in SoHo, Smith’s 1996 examination of the Lower East Side, and Aaron Shkuda’s *The Lofts of Soho*, all of which have become classic examples of the process of gentrification in New York City. These works detail artists role in gentrification as abridged (Zukin 2014; N. Smith 1996; Ley 1996; Rich 2017):

1. A formerly industrial neighborhood is largely vacant after being abandoned by the industry and lower to middle classes that lived and worked there.

2. ‘Starving artists,¹⁷ willing to live in raw, industrial buildings settle into these lower income or vacant areas, executing improvements on their private and public spaces with sweat-equity.
3. Dominant authorities and classes, including powerful economic, social, and political entities form coalitions to invest in these areas, thereby raising the real estate value of the neighborhood.
4. The ‘pioneers’ – artists and other marginalized communities – can no longer afford to live in the area, and their industrial warehouses are converted to luxury bohemian-inspired lofts or other mixed-use ventures.

While the process of gentrification is largely agreed upon by the scholars, artists role as ‘shock troops’ vs. ‘victims’ of gentrification is up for debate. This paper engages the latter interpretation, especially in the case study of the Bell Foundry.

While often blamed as being the cause of gentrification – aka the ‘shock troops,’ (Cameron and Coaffee 2005; Ley 1996; Glass 1964; Miles 1997) many scholars argue that this designation of blame is misguided at best and damaging at worst. As Ann Markusen writes, “artists may be used by developers, even willingly, but they are not the architects or chief supporters of private property and land-use practices that favor single-site transformations of land use against community wishes. (Markusen 2006)” She continues:

... Many artists are of the community in which they live, including many artists of color and immigrant artists. Many are also poor. Their relative poverty along with their need for artistic space drives them along the sweat-equity route. Many artists play active roles in their neighborhoods in working with troubled youth, in visiting prisoners, and in staging and coaching community arts fairs and performances. Artists often see themselves explicitly as a public conscience and as responsible for using their talent in ways that critique power and inequality and advance community. (Markusen 2006)

¹⁷ Wikipedia defines the starving artist as “an artist who sacrifices material well-being in order to focus on their artwork. They typically live on minimum expenses, either for a lack of business or because all their disposable income goes toward art projects.” It refers generally to the unfortunate struggles of the dedicated artist and more specifically to Bohemian ideals. (Trevarrow-Flaherty 2012)

Like Markusen, Elizabeth Strom identifies that while not generally wealthy, artists are rich in social and cultural capital, and the impact of their networks – tangible and intangible on urban neighborhoods – could be the source of the blame for artists’ role in gentrification. The concept of social and cultural capital in particular is utilized in Ley’s discussion of artists and the gentrification process: “The artistic lifestyle, like the creative art-work, deliberately presses the borders of conventional middle-class life, while at the same time representing its advancing, colonizing arm (Ley 2003).” (Rich 2017) In her assessment of Ley, Rich assumes that artists have chosen to live in an impoverished and unsafe state. She writes, “Though artists may have chosen poverty and marginalization, as intermediaries between high and low taste, their esthetic production and technical skill is attractive to the middle class (Ley 2003; Rich 2017).”

While most planning scholars examine arts and gentrification’s effects in top tier cities, emerging scholarship in criminology, sociology, and historic preservation has looked at this in Baltimore City – in the exact neighborhoods and arts district discussed in this paper. Dr. Megan Ashlin Rich’s *Artists are a Tool for Gentrification* and Rebecca Chan’s *Old Buildings, New Ideas: Historic Preservation and Creative Industry Development as Complementary Urban Revitalization Strategies* examine gentrification, historic preservation, and the role of artists in neighborhood revitalization. Chan and Rich both open doors for future research and discuss several concepts that this paper notes but does not cover – namely the discussion of arts and cultural districts and their interconnectedness to artists and gentrification. For example, Rich summarizes the literature and potentials for further research surrounding these themes in *Arts Districts Without Artists*, writing,

Station North has been touted as a “natural” cultural district, one that other cities should replicate (Stern and Seifert 2013). It is “natural” in that the neighborhood has not followed the standard gentrification process of revanchism and displacement, as outlined by Zukin (1982) and Smith (1996), but rather a “third wave of gentrification” (Cameron and Coaffee 2005): revitalization informed by neighborhood stakeholders with little or no displacement of lower-income communities, spearheaded by government in the interest of “regeneration.” ... Even with these seemingly favorable conditions, two key questions remain : can revitalization happen without displacement, and can and should artists be specially protected as neighborhoods transform? (Rich 2015)

While not directly engaging their topics, Chan and Rich’s scholarship has been integral to this research and to the author’s lived experience.¹⁸

Tensions around the role of artists and the process of gentrification are widely debated and acknowledged in the literature. As Rich states, “The disjuncture between large-scale neighborhood change and stakeholder control is at times literally written on the wall, making the connection between artists and gentrification all the more obvious to non-artists. (Rich 2017)” This academic and scholarly consensus or lack thereof has trickled down into mainstream understandings of gentrification and the role of the creative class. In the findings, this adoptive understanding of the concepts and impacts of artists and gentrification will be discussed through the lens of the evictions at the Bell Foundry and the pursuit of safety.

“Creativity is Hard to Define”

Scholars have debated or celebrated Richard Florida’s theories on the creative class endlessly since *Rise of the Creative Class* hit the shelves in 2002. Creativity is an essential component of the creative class and understanding artist-run spaces, and Florida dedicates sixty-two pages of his seminal follow-up work *The Rise of The Creative Class Revisited* to attempting to define or clarify what creativity means in order to align economic and human development. (Florida 2012; Ley 1996) Florida affirms that the economy and society is powered by creativity. A deep dive into Florida’s definition of creativity is necessary to establish the foundations of the agreements and the intersections, the disconnects and debates surrounding such a fundamental yet mushy/squishy concept for planners and for artists: what is creativity?

The purpose of this detailed investigation into Florida’s quest to define creativity is to examine how and why *The Rise of the Creative Class* has become so embedded in the fantasies of

¹⁸ Rebecca Chan is a close personal friend of the author.

artists and planners alike, despite its failings and criticisms from scholars and publics, and to trace its effects on the tensions between safety and creativity. Germane, Florida begins the search for the definition of creativity by leaning on *Webster's* dictionary definition, creativity is “the ability to create new forms.” (Florida 2012) The following table of excerpts traces all of Florida’s attempts to harness definitions of creativity in *The Rise of The Creative Class Revisited’s* sixty-two introductory pages (see Table 01 below):

Richard Florida’s Attempts at Defining Creativity in the Introduction to <i>The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited</i>	
Page #	Excerpt
5	Creativity is “the attribute that distinguishes us, as humans, from other species”
6	Creativity is ‘the ability to create meaningful new forms,’ as Webster's dictionary puts it
6	It is a mistake to think as many do that creativity can be reduced to the creation of new blockbuster interventions new products and new firms create
6	Creativity is pervasive and ongoing; it drives the incremental improvements in products and processes that keep them viable just as much as it does their original invention
6	Technological and economic creativity are nurtured by and interact with artistic and cultural creativity
6	Creativity also requires a social and economic environment that can nurture its many forms
6	Creativity has come to be the most highly prized commodity in our economy- and yet it is not a “commodity.”
6	Creativity comes from people
7	Page 7 Every human is creative - creativity cannot be contained by categories of gender, race, ethnicity, or sexual orientation. And though people can be hired and fired, their creative capacity cannot be bought and sold, or turned on and off at will.
7	Page 7 Creativity must be motivated and nurtured in a multitude of ways, by employers, by creative people themselves, and by the places we live.
9	Page 9 The creative class members “share a common ethos that values creativity, individuality, difference, and merit”
10	Creativity in the world of work is not limited to members of the creative class. Factory workers and even the lowest and service workers have always been creative invaluable ways.
15	Creativity is not limited to technological innovation or new business models.
15	Creativity is multifaceted and multidimensional; it is not something that can be kept in a box and trotted out when one arrives at the office.
16	Creativity involves distinct habits of mind and patterns of behavior that must be cultivated on both an individual basis and in the surrounding society.
16	Creativity pervades everything from our workplace culture to our values and communities, shapes the way we see ourselves as economic and social actors and molds the core of our very identities.
16	The creative ethos “reflects norms and values that both nurture creativity and reinforce its role”
16	Perhaps the most critical, issue is the ongoing tension between creativity and organization. The creative process is social, not just individual; Forms of organization are necessary, but organizations can and frequently do stifle creativity.
18	Creativity is often viewed as a rather mystical affair.
18	Creativity is not the same as “intelligence.”
18	Creativity involves the ability to synthesize.
18	Creativity requires self-assurance and the ability to take risks.
18	Creativity requires the combination of passion and confidence
19	Creative work in fact is often downright subversive, because it disrupts existing patterns of thought and life.
19	One famous definition of creativity is 'the process of destroying one's gestalt in favor of a better one.'
19	Technological creativity, like all creativity, is an act of rebellion.
19	Creativity is not the province of just a few select geniuses who can get away with breaking the mold because they possess superhuman talents. It is a capacity inherent to varying degrees in virtually all of us.
19	Creativity draws crucially on our ordinary abilities perusing noticing, remembering, seeing, speaking, hearing, understanding language, and recognizing analogies: all these talents of every man are important.

19	Quoting Margaret Boden: “Someone who believes that creativity is a rare or special power cannot sensibly hope that perseverance, or education, will enable them to join the creative elite. Either one is already a member or will never be. Monolithic notions of creativity, talent or intelligence are discouraging in the same way.”
20	Creativity is multidimensional and experimental.
20	The varied forms of creativity that we typically regard as different from one another—technological creativity (or invention), economic creativity (entrepreneurship), and artistic and cultural creativity, among others—are in fact deeply interrelated.
21	Creativity can take a long time before it bears fruit.
12	Surely some creative people are inspired by money but studies find that truly creative individuals, from artists and writers to scientists and open source software developers, are driven primarily by internal motivations by the intrinsic rewards and satisfactions of their pursuits

Table 3: Richard Florida's attempts to harness the definition of creativity in "The Rise of the Creative Class Revisited"

Florida's internal contradictions and complications in defining creativity lay the groundwork for the scholarly debate in the literature. Creativity looks different to different people; creativity means different things to different people. Who gets to own creativity? Creativity is contested territory.

In his attempts, Florida shows how passionately enamored he is with creativity, the creative ethos, the entrepreneurial spirit. His passion for creating and imagining is obvious, but it is oddly distracted by the shiny objects and built environment of tech-bro¹⁹ utopias like Silicon Valley or San Francisco. Florida's ideal creative is sitting in a newly constructed coffee shop while coding an app on the latest mobile workstation, their efforts backed by a creative venture capitalist, and pouring ideas and dollars into local and regional creative marketplaces. More importantly, Florida's obsession with creativity is *what he can get out of it*. Florida acknowledges that even service workers, day laborers, the not-creative class, can have ingenuity and creativity, but their creativity is not applicable to Florida's use-value. If he can't extract dollars or inspiration from it, it's not the version of creativity of interest. (Florida 2012)

Ann Markusen's creative is an artist and looks and lives differently than Florida's absurd and disconnected notion of creativity's function. Markusen's creative is the barista with a Master of Fine Arts, making minimum wage and tips while hustling to paint or perform, in service of Florida's tech bro in the coffee shop. (Florida 2012; Markusen 2006) She critiques Florida's purely

¹⁹ Do I need to define tech-bro? it is what it sounds like.

utilitarian valuation of creativity specifically because of his failure to “address [his own] seriously flawed conceptual treatment of creativity,” underscoring that, “human creativity cannot be conflated with years of schooling. (Markusen 2006)”

As Markusen continues in her scathing critique, she acknowledges that “creativity is hard to define.” Praxis becomes impossible and Florida’s creative class becomes illegible and meaningless due to the subjective and undefined notions of creativity and safety. Markusen discusses how these conflation or abstractions of creativity are attractive to planners and municipalities, but that their misconceptions perpetuate the flaws inherent in the theoretical foundations:

The conflation leads policymakers and journalists to wax enthusiastic about the creative class, with wildly different visions of its constituents. ...

Most mayors waving the banner of creativity use it to showcase their anchor arts institutions and to make claims about urban amenities - mostly directed at tourists. But if there is no cohesive, mobile, group of creative professionals driving urban development, urban leaders must fine-tune their policies to diverse interests. No simple strategy will suffice.

In a general but vital extension of the misconception and misunderstandings rooted in the difficulty of defining creativity and the creative class in pursuit of economic growth, Markusen notes, “artists and arts organization managers are enthusiastic about Florida's work, even though many admit that they have not read it. (Markusen 2006)” She claims this excitement is largely due to being acknowledged as important in a larger ecosystem of economics and politics in which arts and cultural producers are often ignored at best and marginalized at worst. According to Markusen, Florida’s theory on the creative class,

...makes [artists] visible and gives them a new claim for public legitimacy since the crisis of the 1990s. But whereas elites use Florida's arguments to argue for the large arts anchor institutions in cities, most artists understand the negative effects that arts trophy-focused expenditures and strategies will have on lower income communities and on the diversity of artistic venues and funding streams. Their visions of urban space celebrate a Jacobs-like mosaic of neighborhoods, each supporting one or several smaller arts spaces. (Markusen 2006)

Like Markusen, Elizabeth Strom notes how difficult it is to quantify creativity and the people who practice it. “Because the population census and the economic census do not have a

single ‘artist’ occupational category, nor do they have a single category encompassing all creative industries, calculating such figures requires grouping together a number of different occupational categories of the North American Industry Classification System (NAICS) codes.” (Strom 2010)

Stern and Seifert’s *Culture and Urban Revitalization* and *Cultivating ‘Natural’ Cultural Districts* excel at quantifying creativity in grassroots organizations, anchor institutions, and migrant or marginalized artist run spaces as conglomerates of district or neighborhood scale activity that further encourages community and economic development. (Stern and Seifert 2007; Stern, Seifert, and Vitiello 2008; Stern and Seifert, n.d.) Unlike these other scholars writing about the intersection of creativity and planning with and for the creative class, Markusen brings her critique of Florida and the practitioners who embrace him to the scale of the artist run space:

Raw agglomerations of artists and members of related occupations do not ensure that synergies develop among them, or that their ranks will grow over time. Nearly invisible in Florida's and other accounts are the spaces and organizations that form the infrastructure for artists to develop their creativity and careers. These include the large, mainstream museums, theaters, and other artist-employing and presenting organizations, including for-profit firms in the arts and unrelated industries. But they also include multiplicities of smaller spaces - some permanent, some temporary - where artistic work is developed and exhibited and where artists learn much of what they need to evolve. (Markusen 2006)

When prompted in an interview with the New York Times on December 8, 2016, Edward Glaeser, a Harvard economist who studies cities, is one of the only scholars to directly connect the failings of Florida’s creative class phenomenon to the aftermath of the Ghost Ship across the nation.

Before speaking with the *NYTimes*, Glaeser had been a known critic of Florida’s half-baked creative class theories. In his critique of *The Rise of the Creative Class*, Glaeser largely appreciated Florida’s efforts to connect esoteric planning issues to the fantasies of the general public. He took serious issue, however, with Florida’s deployment and lack of depth of understanding of creativity’s definition and vital role in the development of urban places. Glaeser writes in his 2004 review:

... while I agree with much of Florida's substantive claims about the real, I end up with doubts about his prescriptions for urban planning. Florida makes the reasonable argument that as cities hinge on creative

people, they need to attract creative people. So far, so good. Then he argues that this means attracting bohemian types who like funky, socially free areas with cool downtowns and lots of density. Wait a minute. Where does that come from? I know a lot of creative people. I've studied a lot of creative people. Most of them like what most well-off people like—big suburban lots with easy commutes by automobile and safe streets and good schools and low taxes. (Glaeser 2004)

As cities across the US have embraced Florida's creative class as a tool for urban revitalization and rebranding, industrial buildings have turned into artists' live/work spaces, serving as sources of affordable housing while providing an underground platform for community and communality. "You have spaces that are not being used in a particular area, and urban entrepreneurship fills the space," Glaeser tells the *New York Times* on December 6, 2016, the day after the Bell Foundry evictions in the wake of the Ghost Ship tragedy. "It's something we love about cities, but it's a constant battle between urban creativity and the attempt of regulators to impose controls on it. (Dougherty 2016)"

Markusen and Glaeser's acknowledgement of the tension between safety and creativity is a critique of all urban spaces, and reflects their continuing criticism of the deployment of the creative class, because while working with artists is desirable, there is no "quick fix" to disinvestment. So how important is creativity's role in this grand scheme of planning for cities with and for arts and cultural communities? Glaeser suggests:

Sure, creativity matters. The people who have emphasized the connection between human capital and growth always argued that this effect reflected the importance of idea transmission in urban areas. But there is no evidence to suggest that there is anything to this diversity or Bohemianism, once you control for human capital. As such, mayors are better served by focusing on the basic commodities desired by those with skills, than by thinking that there is a quick fix involved in creating a funky, hip, Bohemian downtown. (Glaeser 2004)

As theory runs downhill into practice, the meandering scholarly understandings or lack thereof of creativity and safety are reflected in day-to-day operations of artists and cities. Who has the right to define and be creative is a cultural, social, and personal existential dilemma at the heart of attempting to answer the question: who has the right to be both creative and safe? The

implications of this scholarly debate in practice and in theory are discussed in detail in the findings sections of this paper.

Creative Placemaking as a Shared Territory Between Artists and Planners

Artist run arts spaces are often lumped into the use or role of arts and culture in terms of creative placemaking when discussed by planners. Creativity is so important to this genre, it's in the name. So how do planners define creative placemaking if it is to encompass artist run spaces?

Andrew Zitcer defines placemaking by citing the National Endowment for the Arts:

Creative placemaking is when artists, arts organizations, and community development practitioners deliberately integrate arts and culture into community revitalization work—placing arts at the table with land-use, transportation, economic development, education, housing, infrastructure, and public safety strategies. (Zitcer 2020)

Mark Stern and Susan Seifert of the Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) with Domenic Vitiello, while discussing these arts and cultural spaces, frames a similar definition with an additional agenda, acknowledging that culture – especially non-mainstream culture – simply extends consumer choices in the U.S. to native born residents as “Thai food, a Latino band, and an exhibit of African art provide them with new diversions for a Friday evening or Sunday afternoon. (Stern, Seifert, and Vitiello 2008) As posited by Hunter et al, Black Placemaking is a foil to the status quo, a scenario in which placemaking is always about finding pleasure amid challenging circumstances, asserting presence through connections, and working as a form of resistance. (Hunter et al. 2016) Any definition of placemaking, as Grodach says, “engages in the debate over the use of the arts as an amenity to attract the creative class and the associated tendency of planners to approach the arts as an instrument to enhance neighborhood status and the value of real estate. (Grodach 2011)” When taken as a whole, these definitions begin to capture placemaking, but the applicability of this definition to artist run spaces is assumed, not explicit. There is a heavily implied white middle-class subject in SIAP’s determination of placemaking as a tool that extends consumer choices that is underscored in Grodach’s approach –

both center the artists as producers of culture, not the consumers of it, implicitly affirming arts and creative placemaking's status of servitude in a haves and have-nots economy. (Grodach 2011; Stern and Seifert 2007)

Zitcer asserts that if the meaning of the concept isn't one to be fixed, that at least those stakeholders who are in the game might have standing and agency to evolve the concept of placemaking. (Zitcer 2020) Black Placemaking hopes that actions and interventions that privilege the creative and celebratory – that being Black could be a corrective framework to perceptions of communities existing solely under violence, along with the potential creation of sites of endurance and resistance – should have a spot in the universe. (Hunter et al. 2016) Grodach acknowledges arts spaces as institutions, as nerve centers in a regional arts scene, as vital to a local cultural economy. (Grodach 2011) SIAP points out that for migrants – like the rest of practitioners at the placemaking table – “‘rules’ are changing rapidly, so even as migrants learn rules, they are no longer what they once were. (Stern, Seifert, and Vitiello 2008)”

Some nuance is perhaps missing in the descriptions and perceptions of these spaces of arts and culture - where is the counterculture? Zitcer discusses power-relations sprinkled with Foucault's notions of the local versus wider more universal patterns of domination. Does dynamic nominalism and spatial change actually transform the space of possibilities for personhood? (Zitcer 2020) Mainstream nonprofit arts spaces and marginalized cultural spaces, semiprofessional post-art school spaces, and pop-up music festivals, all share an underlying ethos that's about not being for or against the status quo of big art or the art world. They literally define themselves by what they are not, while being active players in the thing they don't want to be. SIAP reminds us, “migrant artists and cultural participants often create their own institutions and venues at the edge of the established arts scene. In doing so, they have helped shift the balance between the nonprofit cultural sector and the commercial and informal sectors.” (Stern, Seifert, and Vitiello 2008) These latent but shared definitions of *being what they are by being what they are not* are an

inherent and vital characteristic of the fringe in which these placemakers – artist run arts spaces - survive.

As these planning-derived adopted definitions of placemaking show, the role of artist run spaces - even when considered under the auspices of placemaking - is consistently positioned counter to a dominant power. Thereby, they are inherently “unsafe” to the status quo. The relational identity of self-organized arts spaces as the counterculture —as the subversive vs. the dominant—is ingrained in the historical, political, social, and creative roots of placemaking. Artists and non-planning academics have examined and portrayed the importance of the creative act and its relationship to artist’s space since the Renaissance. While the relationship of artist to arts space has shifted over time, the relationship of the artist to their space – in relation to the artist’s place in life and perceived productivity – has remained a consistent imperative.

The literature review questions if artists’ and interdisciplinary definitions and history of creating and operating as the counterculture are as important as the dominant planning voices and debate surrounding creative placemaking and the role of the creative class. The literature of planning - which represents the dominant authority – is not consistent with the historical and theoretical literature of the arts – the non-dominant authority. The lack of clarity in the definitions of safety and creativity trickled down from the scholars to the planners to the artists, exacerbating the tensions in not only theorizing planning with and for artists and artist run spaces, but also the practical implications of practicing planning, as is shown later in the finding’s sections. As the structure of space mirrors the structure of thought, in order to have safe and creative space we must have shared thought; in order to share thought, we must share space with people who are not like us.

Black placemaking and Stern and Seifert’s natural cultural districts provide a critique of the status quo. Black placemaking shares thought and space. There a heavily implied white middle class subject in the dominant form of creative placemaking, however (see SIAP quote

above about Thai food and Latinx bands), an approach that seems to center the producers of culture, not the consumers of it. Artist run spaces and alternative, artist run placemaking centers the producers, rather than the consumers, of culture. There's something here that could be drawn out about the intended subject of creative placemaking in the first place, tied to the notion of "safety." Is creative placemaking meant to benefit cultural producers or cultural consumers? Creative placemaking often functions by making the foreign or new into something recognizable and "safe" for the middle-class consumer who is the actual implied subject of the space. Who is the space *for*? The maker of the art or the audience and assumed buyer of it? In the following sections, the research enters this debate at the intersections of understanding creative placemaking, gentrification, and the arts in order to explore who safety and creativity is for, who gets to decide, and how in Baltimore City artist run spaces.

Part 03: Methodology & Research Design: Sources, Data, and Methods

The eviction of the Bell Foundry came as a surprise for local artists and city officials as Baltimore artist run spaces have typically benefited from decades of a 'look the other way' policy – an informal understanding that if the authority can't see what you are doing, then you can go on doing it. The Ghost Ship and the Bell Foundry tragedies forced officials to turn back from 'the other way'. Those in power were now looking more directly, and the city feared being liable for all of its years of passive permission. In the immediate aftermath of these tragedies, Baltimore's response briefly took the national stage alongside Oakland and Seattle for its public and robust attention paid to the crisis at hand, but that effort largely dwindled, was not robustly analyzed for success, nor supported long-term for deeply impactful outcomes.

In order to narrow potentially unanswerable theoretical questions regarding whether safety and creativity and coexist, for the purposes of this thesis, the following methodology

investigates the focused research question which interrogates the problems that the Ghost Ship, Bell Foundry, and related tragedies have displayed and seeks solutions for artist run spaces in Baltimore City: how can safety and creativity coexist in Baltimore City artist run spaces?

This research project reinserts Baltimore's efforts and lessons-learned into the national and regional planning conversation as cities continue to face decline and development that imperils - and invests in - arts and culture for political, economic, and community ends. The research design for this effort is informed by sub questions: Why are artist run spaces under threat in Baltimore City and what possibilities exist for arts spaces to be safe? What are the tensions that complicate creativity and safety's coexistence? Research methods include reviewing and synthesizing published policy reports and plans, interrogating, or revisiting primary sources and archives as they pertain to artist run spaces, and conducting interviews with stakeholders of Baltimore City artist run spaces, in particular, those who have direct knowledge and experience relating to the Bell Foundry and the Arts Safe Space Task Force. Sources and data collected for analysis via these methods includes but is not limited to informal, semi-structured interviews, newspapers, blog, and magazine articles, primary documents (Grant Reports, Memos, and Meeting Minutes from representatives of the Arts Safe Space Task Force and the Arts Space Technical Assistance Program; music, poetry, and artwork created by artists in response to/at the Bell Foundry, published municipal reports, and personal experience of the author.²⁰ Newspaper sources include but are not limited to the local archives of the Baltimore Sun and the now defunct Baltimore City Paper. National coverage from the *New York Times*, *Vice* and *Rolling Stone* Magazines, and *The East Bay Times* out of Oakland, CA - which was awarded a 2017 Pulitzer Prize for their coverage of the Ghost Ship tragedy - also inform this research, amongst many

²⁰ See Positionality Statement below.

others.²¹ Baltimore City published policy reports and plans are integral to understanding the local policy landscape in the years proceeding and immediately after the Bell Foundry and Arts Safe Space Task Force’s work. These published reports include the Mayor's Task Force on Safe Arts Spaces (2017) and the Mayor's Working Group on Arts & Entertainment Districts Report (2015). For a complete list of reports and newspapers cited, please see the bibliography.

Research Design: Interviews

In order to include opinions from stakeholders that contributed to or influenced the recommendations of the Arts Safe Space Task Force and its subsequent implementation, conversations were initiated with representatives starting in May of 2022 on behalf of this research. This study is based on nearly 100 on-record, total informal interviews with Baltimore City artists, arts service organization professionals, City and State officials, community and economic developers, non-profit leaders, arts service and advocacy organizations, and other creative and cultural stakeholders, including members of the Arts Safe Space Task Force. Individuals actively involved in local institutions including philanthropic organizations and community development corporations or individuals directly involved with neighborhood or community revitalization or redevelopment were considered to be stakeholders. These interviews provide background, personal narratives or opinions, and context for the Bell Foundry and Arts Safe Space Task Force. Vital to the research, interviews have served to put guardrails on the author’s perspective and provided much needed detail on the subject. The interviews are not the defining data analyzed in the project, and, when included, augment other sources as context or by

²¹ “For relentless coverage of the “Ghost Ship” fire, which killed 36 people at a warehouse party, and for reporting after the tragedy that exposed the city’s failure to take actions that might have prevented it.” The Pulitzer Prizes. “*Staff of East Bay Times, Oakland, CA.*” 2017. <https://www.pulitzer.org/winners/staff-27>

providing a primary voice in service of answering the research questions. For a more detailed breakdown of interviewees by profession, see Appendix B: Interviewees.

Research Limitations

The case study proposed on artist run spaces in Baltimore City is bounded by circumstance. Limitations for this research include a lack of consistent access to formal data, difficulty in establishing consistent typologies of artist run spaces, and a potential deficient in social and political will to not only invest in implementation of strategies, but also to fundamentally understand the existing complexities of spaces by and for the arts. Direct limitations in executing the research include:

1. Hesitancy of interviewees to discuss the subject on the record.
2. The transient nature of arts and cultural professionals (especially artists) in a post-pandemic landscape that has decimated the industry.
3. Lacking quid pro quo availability on my part as a researcher (“brain picking” vs equal contribution).
4. Lacking feelings of safety.
5. Positionality of the researcher as both a blessing and a curse.

Methodology: Positionality Statement

As a Baltimore City artist, and I am well attuned to the ways that the professional and cultural ecosystem relies on spaces like the Bell Foundry for the production of its culture. As the inaugural artist in residence at the Baltimore Museum of Art’s Patricia and Mark Joseph Center for Education, all of my work was created in spaces that were shut down due to the Bell Foundry evictions. And just a few years prior, in 2013, my former studio actually did catch fire and nearly

burned down - displacing my friends, their practices, their homes, and their contribution to the creative and economic vitality of the city (See Figure 6 for image of Open Space fire).



Figure 6: Open Space Gallery gets support after Remington fire. May 03, 2013. (Wesley Case 2013)

My artist-as-planner practice is grounded in the questions of how we make a place, and how a place makes us. As Artist- in-Residence at the Baltimore Museum of Art, I embraced a mandate to show up, be present, and address our political, social, and cultural landscape, especially with respect to the way those complexities intersect the built environment. That mandate informs my professional, educational, and artistic practice, it has resulted in a transformation in ideas and projects about the intersections between planning for artists and artists who influence planning.

In my non-profit and consulting work, I was part of the team that answered a call post-Ghost Ship to the best of our/my ability in direct and indirect ways, raising over \$2.9 million

between 2017 - 2019 for capital improvements and new development in arts and cultural spaces, assisting artist-owned projects on their path to sustainability and to become code compliant. To cite one example, I oversaw development ensuring that another jeopardized artist-run project permanently acquired their building from the city and executed significant physical upgrades.

Having built many projects with many publics, I work across disciplines to make space in order that even more people can make work. I helped craft and pass the first legal artist live-work definition in Baltimore, ignited legislation for the C-2-Entertainment District Overlay, and continue to advocate for current Baltimore zoning code updates and revisions. I am dedicated to radicalizing and innovating new ways to redefine and implement artist-led place-centric planning.

Responding to COVID19, I worked to develop and implement the Baltimore Artist Emergency Relief Fund – a cross-sector initiative to support individual artists whose lives and livelihood were decimated by the pandemic. Early findings in 2020 from 644 applications as submitted to the fund reported losses of over \$3.45 million - only a small picture of the economic, social, and civic impact of artists on Baltimore City.

As I have seen in my 20 + years of practicing as an artist, as an educator, and as a real estate developer, artists and artist-run spaces continue to affect not only the value of real estate, but also the price of eggs. It is more imperative than ever that cultural producers are at the table forming plans and policy, developing and owning space. Artists must redistribute and benefit from the creation of wealth that they are so often contributors to.

Via and after completing this City & Regional Planning Thesis, I hope to continue addressing catastrophic and systemic issues impacting artists and cities like Baltimore, especially as it is where I call home. My goal is to scale up the theory and practice of bridge-building between the worlds and work of artists and arts spaces, planning, preservation, and development. I believe arts-focused preservation, development, and planning can establish innovative and inclusive spaces within cities by meeting people where they are, by acknowledging the stewards and makers

of existing space, and by acting as gracious, but invited, guests and leaders within complex and ever-evolving terrains. This research is both a personal mea culpa to what I was not able to achieve in the recent past, but also a pleading that there is room and possibility to accomplish much more in the future – especially when the future is now.

Part 04: Findings – Tensions Between Safety and Creativity in Baltimore City Artist-Run Spaces

This findings section presents, analyses, and discusses the data collected from 98 informal interviews conducted with Baltimore City artists, arts service organization professionals, City and State officials, community and economic developers, non-profit leaders, and other creative and cultural stakeholders, including members of the Arts Safe Space Task Force. The following sections consider the perspectives of the interviewees alongside primary source statements documented in local news media and newspaper articles to examine how the actions and assumptions of the Arts Safe Space Task Force contributed to creating or exacerbating tensions between safety and creativity in Baltimore City artist-run spaces.

Tension 01: Safety Meant Different Things to Different Constituents

Safety is subjective, and its variation in meaning when not collectively understood can impede working towards collectively “safer” spaces. Immediately after the evictions of the Bell Foundry and throughout the work of the Task Force, Baltimore City regulatory agencies continued to affirm the arts spaces like the Bell Foundry were inherently “unsafe,” repeating that the spaces – the buildings themselves – posed threats to tenants and public wellbeing and were in violation of building and housing codes. As Oakland fire officials referred to the Ghost Ship as a “tinderbox, (Verzoni 2017)” locally and nationally fire and regulatory officials continued to call underground arts spaces “Death-traps .(McLaughlin 2016)” The artists who live in and rely on

these spaces, however, felt they were what made them, what protected them, and what saved them. “There’s so many layers to what safety looks like,” McCandlish, a former Bell Foundry tenant says, “Structural hazard is only one of them – and not even, for many, the most important one.” (Steinhauer and Kirkman 2016)

In the following section, safety is found to mean different things to different people. This disconnected or subjective notion of safety actually increased the threats to life safety, as it impacted the ability of the Task Force to engender trust amongst the constituents it was formed to serve. As Task Force member Jeannie Howe – Executive Director of the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance and daughter of a fire marshal – expressed her awareness of arts spaces’ hesitations regarding coming forward for help to assess their space for potential life safety hazards, stated “I think the public safety issues are real, [but artists living in underground spaces are traditionally loath to draw attention to themselves] for fear of triggering some kind of inspection.” While the Task Force needed artists to come forward in order to help make their spaces safer, artists, ironically, would not come forward for fear of their safety. Language – the words used and what they meant to different people, are a major theme of this paper, in planning with and for artists and arts spaces in Baltimore City. The work of the Task Force would have been more successful if it came with or created a bespoke dictionary. This paper finds that the tensions between safety and creativity coexisting in artist run spaces is due in part to conflicting definitions and understandings of safety.

“Safety” to City Regulatory Agencies

Fire marshals and city regulatory agencies are charged with protecting the health, safety and welfare of Baltimore City and its inhabitants. To do their job, city officials typically investigate spaces – not just artist spaces, any space - when they receive a citizen complaint. Though occurring only three days after the Ghost Ship fire, Katy Byrne, Deputy Assistant Commissioner for Litigation in the city Department of Housing and Community Development’s Permits and Code Enforcement Division shared with the media that such was the case with the Bell Foundry. (Case and Rector 2016a) Details on the origins and nature of the complaint were never released publicly, nor was a formal statement ever made by city officials regarding the exact unsafe conditions that led to the evictions of the dozens of Bell Foundry tenants on December 5,



Figure 7: This Dec. 6th 2016 photo shows the interior of The Bell Foundry in Baltimore. Baltimore officials shut down the arts building Monday Dec 5th 2016 for safety violations and evicted dozens of tenants three days after a fire at a California warehouse-turned artist enclave killed three dozen people (Linderman 2016)

2016. The following shows what city fire and regulatory officials did say about their efforts to ensure safety.

On the day of the evictions, Wesley Case and Kevin Rector of the *Baltimore Sun* reported that upon their arrival at the Bell Foundry in response to the anonymous complaint from that morning,

...inspectors encountered "numerous safety violations as well as deplorable conditions," said Roman Clark, a Fire Department spokesman. Clark said inspectors found four violations: no valid permit, unsafe conditions, use of flammables and combustibles, and unlawful removal of beams from the ceiling.

Tania Baker, a spokeswoman for the city housing department, said the property at 1539 N. Calvert St. was "vacated" by code enforcement inspectors because there were "holes in the floor on the second level, electrical issues, and evidence that individuals were living in the property without a proper use and occupancy permit."

The Fire Department immediately issued a cease-and-desist order barring tenants from using the building, while housing officials boarded up the building as condemned.

Baker said the building's occupants "are not allowed to use the building until the proper use and occupancy permit is received and the building is up to code." (Case and Rector 2016a)

Byrne attributed the tenants' evictions and the Bell Foundry's condemnation to a long list of fire hazards. Partially converted into illegal living quarters, the building had so many major safety violations that there was no option but to immediately evacuate the building and evict the dozens of artists who were tenants there. Tenants were told to leave the building without their possessions. Rector reports,

When Baltimore fire and housing inspectors entered the Bell Foundry arts building this week to investigate a complaint about substandard conditions inside, they were confronted with a "tragedy waiting to happen," a high-ranking housing official said...

The commercial warehouse of art studios and nonprofit theater space ... had been partially converted into illegal living quarters, and had so many major safety violations that there was no option but to immediately evacuate the building and evict the dozens of artists who were tenants there, said Katy Byrne, ... As the inspectors made their way further into the sprawling, mazelike building, the violations appeared one after another, Byrne said.

A rickety, makeshift third floor of living space was discovered above the second floor; ceiling beams intended to hold the roof up had been removed; major appliances like a stove were plugged into an ungrounded, overwhelmed electrical system; lights were hung from flammable rope; combustible and flammable chemicals were stored near wood and other debris, according to Byrne.

Also, an unsanctioned public assembly space with a stage and a bar was found in the basement without sufficient means for moving people in and out; there was evidence of a past electrical fire; there were no fire barriers between living and working spaces; and a heating system lacking a permit was blowing air back into a furnace room — creating conditions ripe for carbon monoxide poisoning and a possible explosion, Byrne said.

"Oh my God, this is horrible," Byrne said of her reaction. "We need to get people out of here right away. We need to get out of here right away. The electricity needs to stop, and we need to assess everything that we have... Thank goodness we did receive a complaint and people are safe," she added. "I don't think it was lost on any of us — we all saw what happened in Oakland." ...

She said housing officials "try to balance public safety with ... the upheaval it causes people when they have to leave where they're working or where they are living," but the Bell Foundry was "so extraordinarily dangerous" that it had to be condemned. (Rector 2016)

While Byrne said the city was not actively looking to shut down artist spaces in the shadow of the Ghost Ship tragedy, her sentiments and statements reflected the perspectival tensions in understanding safety. What Byrne called “horrible” was referred to by its inhabitants as a “sanctuary.” (See Figure 8: This photo shows the interior of The Bell Foundry on July 25th, 2015. The photographer’s caption reads "A Baltimore Artist's Sanctuary." ” "We're not targeting the art community," Byrne said. "There are legitimate spaces in the city that have use and occupancies for artist space as well as a residential component." (Case and Rector 2016b)

After the initial statements made by city officials including Byrne, Blake, and Baker above, the city went largely silent on speaking about safety – or about arts spaces in general while Mayor-elect Catherine Pugh was sworn into office on December 6th, 2016. Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake made no public statement during her last days in office regarding the evictions at the Bell Foundry. In further sections, the political ramifications of artist run spaces will be discussed in further detail, as the political environment in Baltimore City is reflected in the care or lack thereof in the safety of artists and their spaces. What was said and how it was said deeply mattered.

“Safety” to The Artists

The tenants of the Bell Foundry and the arts and cultural community across Baltimore’s landscape had polar opposite perceptions of the safety and setting of the Bell Foundry and other underground venues like it than those views of the regulatory officials. The following daylights

some of these

marginalized voices,

identifying the tension

between the city – the

dominant authority’s

position on safety – and

that of the residents – the

precarious cultural

producers – in order to

better plan with and for

artist run spaces. This

research shows that

artists, especially the

tenants of the Bell

Foundry, did not believe

their living conditions to

be unsafe. They largely



Figure 8: This photo shows the interior of The Bell Foundry on July 25th, 2015. The photographer’s caption reads “A Baltimore Artist’s Sanctuary.” (El-Amine 2015)

reacted with anger, sadness, and d

above, remained resolutely sterile or emotionless in their responses, or – like Byrne – were

shocked and appalled and therefore grateful that the artists were no longer living in the building.

Early to criticize the city's actions and seemingly heartless response, Bell Foundry tenant Jacob Kenna spoke with reporters on the scene while the evictions were occurring. "This is how cities show solidarity. They crash down on people," Kenna said. "This might just be what everyone thinks they need to do for everybody's good." (Case and Rector 2016a) Many of the tenants and interviewees for this research described the city's actions and orchestration as "aggressive," "demeaning," or "condescending." Koala Largess, a local artist stated, "All they seemed to want to prove was that they had power and ability to be abusive. They had no concern that a lot of folks have nowhere to take their stuff." (Case and Rector 2016a) Ava Pipitone, a friend of the Bell Foundry tenants found gender and sexual discrimination and disrespect in the speed with which the evictions occurred, saying, "How quickly a safe space for queer [and] trans identities and other marginalized identities was devalued by the city is incredibly disturbing to me as a trans woman. On a very flimsy argument, it was erased and devalued with no notice." (Case and Rector 2016a)

Aran Keating, Artistic Director of the Baltimore Rock Opera Society, the building's first-floor tenant, also said the condemnation of the building came as a surprise — and one that threatens the nonprofit's future in the city. "Stuff like this could sink us. We've been an anchor in Station North for four years, and it feels like this is the thanks we get," he said. (Case and Rector 2016a) Most of the tenants, the arts and cultural community, and even members of the Task Force consistently expressed a passionate belief that the building was in fact safe. That the building and fire inspectors were incorrect in their assessments of the threats to life safety. That life safety was actually not the most important form of safety to their personal and creative survival.

The consensus shows that artists valued creative safety, psychological safety, emotional safety, and social safety over their physical safety. The following statements from Bell Foundry tenants and illuminate their values and understandings of safety.



Figure 9: Former Bell Foundry tenant Qué Pequeño in his room (photo by Audrey Gatewood). (Gatewood and Kirkman, *Baltimore Loses a DIY Haven for Marginalized Artists* 2016)

Nkemakolam Nwaigwe, an artist known as Qué Pequeño and a former Bell Foundry tenant (See Figure 9 for environmental portrait of Pequeño), described his experience at the building which he used to call home:

Back in September [of 2015], I started using the basement of the Bell Foundry as a venue, calling it 'You Know TF Where.' This basement served as a performance space for Black and Brown artists in Baltimore, from Baltimore, that couldn't find a venue anywhere else.

This place saved my life because I was on the verge of homelessness when I was offered the studio space over here. It saved my life creatively because before then, like, I wasn't really working that much. But moving in here actually, like, just cultivated my skills as a creative artist, and I would not be the artist I am today if it wasn't for Bell Foundry.

I think [the city] should fund us. Honestly, they have all these grants for these people that aren't even from the city, so I feel like: one, an apology must be issued to all [people] such as myself in the city, by the city, from the city, Black artists. And I feel like ... this should be the spark for them to start funding artists like myself, like, yearly. They should like stop looking at places like MICA and start looking at places like DIY spaces, places like the streets, places like You Know TF Where where we see some of the greatest artists - some of the best artists - in Baltimore City. (Fox 2016)

“I wouldn’t be an artist today if it wasn’t for taking safe haven in the Bell Foundry... a safe haven for Black artists.” Many others reiterated this sentiment from Pequeño, who’s name translates to ‘how small,’ when recounting their experiences living or performing or visiting at the Bell Foundry. Emily Eaglin, a Baltimore filmmaker and activist wrote on behalf of Pequeño via a GoFundMe established in the immediate hours after the Bell Foundry evictions.

According to officials the massive eviction is due to fire code violations, but what we are facing here is an even larger human rights violation on behalf of Baltimore City. This reactionary ambush under the guise of a fire hazard (when they were well aware of this situation and possible code violations for much longer) echoes the biases of an unjust system with prejudices against a majority of people living in Baltimore. Many of the Bell Foundry's artists were POC & Queer identifying, who in fact had a legal lease. The city has not offered them relocation assistance as it is needed and tonight many are left in darkness. (Eaglin n.d.)

The sentiments were not the only thing shared; the GoFundME eventually raised a total of \$21,233 for the displaced, out of a \$5,000 goal. (Eaglin n.d.) The Bell Foundry also fostered a community traditionally marginalized in Baltimore City. Georgia McCandlish, a printmaker and former tenant of the Bell Foundry, described how, at the time of the condemnation, more than half of the dozen or so occupants were “non-men, women, and queer-identified folks.” Its inclusivity and diversity created a place where people with marginalized identities could “recuperate, live in a community, and be cared for,” they said (Steinhauer and Kirkman 2016). McCandlish continued,

“For a lot of people, being in the Bell Foundry was a lot safer than wherever else they would’ve been. It’s safer than being in a home under threat of eviction, safer than being in an abusive relationship where you’re trapped in an expensive lease, safer than being on a street that’s highly policed and someone might arrest or report you because of your skin color.” (Steinhauer and Kirkman 2016)

A friend of Pequeño’s, Abdu Ali, a Baltimore rapper/performer/writer/activist, noted, “It’s a limited amount of black-owned creative spaces in this city, and the ones that do exist have a hard time existing because they’re highly policed,” he said. “They got more pressure on their back to follow the rules, to stay alive, to make money.” (Campbell 2017) Person Abide, a nonbinary artist

and tenant of the Bell Foundry, again identified the space as a “sanctuary” for people like them.

They said of their relationship to the space’s evolution over time,

As a queer person of color, I saw that space function as a sanctuary not just for myself, but increasingly, because of advocacy for more people of color, we got to see the space go from a mostly white punk house and venue to mostly people of color – black and brown artists and queer folks. (Steinhauer and Kirkman 2016)

The safe space at the Bell Foundry for gender non-conforming and Black and BIPOC folks was no accident, but rather reflected an intentional cultivation of inclusivity and welcoming cultivated by the residents. “Many people that have been deemed irrelevant to society we had over to our space. The space became more safe for Black people—not just Black artists but Black people. They came to get away from the bullshit,” Pequeño stated. (Soderberg 2016) The Bell Foundry – and spaces like it across Baltimore – provided homes for marginalized communities, but also encouraged others who likewise identified to move to the city.

Vindicating the literature on the creative class, artists flock to Baltimore and to spaces like the Bell Foundry because they can be part of a creative and social community. They find these communities attractive and safe, even if they are unpermitted or in disinvested areas of Baltimore. JB (formerly Jana) Hunter, a non-binary Baltimore musician who performs with the band Lower Dens, describes his experience in response to the Bell Foundry going up for sale on April 10th, 2017:

I've been in spaces like [the Bell Foundry] in different cities for a long time. Baltimore's kind of marginal underground arts community is much more vital and has been for a long time than a lot of other places. That's one of the reasons that I moved here. It might be the biggest reason I moved here, and I think people really undervalue that. People have conception of what an arts community is supposed to look like so they can sell it, but this is what this is where art comes from. . . . oftentimes people who are marginalized people without a lot of money end up in situations like this. It's not like they prefer to live in unsafe conditions. That's their luck. (Baltimore Sun Video 2017)

Another local musician, Ed Schrader, acknowledges that safety wasn’t much of a concern when performing, touring, or being creative. Safety always took second place to community, culture, and creativity for them and their friends. "There would definitely be times I'd walk into a DIY space and I'd think to myself, 'Man, if I was a fire inspector, I'd shut this place down. The 37-

year-old adult in me is also like, 'Well you shouldn't be plugging that toaster into the same wall as the that P.A. system. No, no, no,'" Schrader said of the venues in which they lived and played.

Schrader's awareness is what the Task Force members were hoping to capitalize on to prevent a Ghost Ship tragedy from happening in Baltimore. "We know that often there's spaces that artists are occupying that are not up to code or not safe for them to live in," local artist, former Executive Director of the Station North Arts & Entertainment District, and Task Force member Elissa Blount Moorhead said. She also acknowledged, however, the tensions and distances between safety and creativity, between safety and communal living, between safety and being a member of a marginalized population. According to Moorhead, "you can't call yourself an arts district or a city that cares about the arts if you only have spaces that people are trying to cobble together. There have to be spaces where people can live in community."

As chair of the Artist Needs Committee of the Arts Safe Space Task Force, as a Black woman, and as a practicing artist, Moorhead publicly described the tension surrounding the conflicting notions of safety during Mayor Catherine Pugh's announcement of the Task Force on December 16, 2022:

"Safe. I'm really sort of conflicted about this word. Safe, safety, what's safe to whom, and what safe really means. And what these spaces really have been doing, and what art spaces all across the country do is create sanctuary, which is maybe a higher standard, because we talk about physical as well as an intellectual and creative space. And I think Baltimore is particularly suited, more so than any city in the country, which is why I'm here, to create a really, really huge, creative ideological shift around that, and to become a global model. (Ober 2016)"

Bridging the gap between what safety meant to city bureaucrats versus what safety meant to artists would become a major and yet unresolved tension in the work of the Task Force.

Shutdowns as Targeted Attacks on Artists

These issues, for artists like Dan Deacon—an electronic musician who lived, worked, and performed in artist run spaces including at the Bell Foundry space in the past, and served on the

Arts Safe Space Task Force—go beyond building codes and the tensions between safety and creativity. He and many others perceived the evictions at spaces like the Bell Foundry as targeted attacks against artists, not just in service of gentrification, but also against their counter-cultural and communal ethos. Deacon told *Billboard* in December of 2016,

“I’ve felt some of the safest feelings I’ve ever felt in [warehouse] spaces where I can truly be myself and feel unjudged and unguarded and not worry about authority, but I’ve certainly felt unsafe in a crowd after a sporting event gets out and there’s 50,000 drunk and screaming fans, but no one’s taking about shutting down stadiums.” (Gensler 2016)

These suspicions of coordinated attacks emphasize the futility in policing the ephemerality of the underground, despite the good intention of protecting occupants’ life safety. Deacon continues, “There are always young people who are going to create and discover these spaces, it’s just the nature of it. You can displace people, but they’re not going to go away.” (Gensler 2016) In interviews for this research, another member of the Task Force representing the community and economic development industry reiterated Deacon’s sentiment in summarizing their work with city regulatory agencies and artists in Baltimore City, saying,

The eviction moratorium was at least helping, but the more [the City] does their job in going after these spaces – and I mean, it is their job to protect people, we can’t realistically ask them to stop doing it - the deeper underground they are driving everyone, and it’s making it harder to not only find them, but to understand how threatened they really are and do the work to cure the code violations. We can’t fix what we don’t know is broken.

-Anonymous Community & Economic Development Interviewee No. 6

It may seem extreme to posit that artist run spaces were under targeted attack, to posit that the city should literally cease performing code enforcement inspections or issuing violations when threats to life safety were present in artist run spaces. However, Neo-Nazis and extreme right-wing social conservatives did indeed attack artist run spaces across the country via a viral thread²² from the online message board 4Chan that called for people to report "leftist" art spaces to local police and fire departments for violations, knowing that closures and inspections are part

²² Viral thread hyperlink directs to:
https://twitter.com/pictureplane?ref_src=twsrc%5Egoogle%7Ctwcamp%5Eserp%7Ctwgr%5Eauthor

of a larger struggle between city government and artists around the country. (D. Dandridge-Lemco 2016) *Next City* reported at the time that the Fort Worth, TX fire marshal had received seven anonymous complains reporting DIY music venues in seven hours. These complaints were traced back to internet trolls, one of whom had commented online that the Ghost Ship was a “radical leftist commune rife with HIV, drugs and alternative lifestyle degeneracy.” (Kaufman 2017) Even if the artists could have been convinced at the time to not fear the city agencies whose role was to protect them, there was still very real danger looming from extremist internet bigots who were weaponizing building code. Artist run spaces in Baltimore City were on their hit list.

The tension between trust and ensuring the work of the Task Force to increase safety was a major topic of discussion and debate at the February 2017 Arts Safe Space Task Force’s public forum at the Baltimore War Memorial building,²³ as shown in the following exchange:

Dan Deacon “It’s very hard for people to think that they can reach out and ask for help when they are afraid that the hand that is going to help them is going to pull them out of their space and they are going to be displaced.”

Aaron Maybin (public comment) “There’s already a distrust between the Community citizens and ..and those agencies... They look at this task force as an extension of that same bureaucracy. So, in order for you there to be a true partnership between Community, Community has to feel like it has a stake”

Jon Laria, Chair “Unfortunately, you know, trust is something that takes a long time to build up and the worst time to try and develop trust is in a crisis. And I would argue that that the, you know, what’s happened at Bell Foundry was it was a crisis for sure for both the people who are directly affected. And for the city larger and it’s created this effort which is, if not a crisis, certainly in a very urgent. Need to act. And as we’ve talked about that quickly, so we’re struggling a little bit because I think it’s hard, it’s hard to develop that trust on the fly. ... We’re all going to have to trust each other as much as we can get as much information as we possibly we can try and make some good recommendations hopefully the mayor will see fit to implement them and then we can all work together to build or rebuild the trust that needs to happen so that this dynamic doesn’t persist. But we kind of are where we are.

Elissa Blount-Moorhead “To your point about what trust. Let, let me just start with trust because you know, I’ve come from a community that has very good reason not to trust anybody in this country at all. And at the end of the day, I caution people in terms of their expectations from anybody who’s working in

²³ The Mayor’s Safe Art Space Task Force Public Forum sought input from the public to help create a citywide network of safe, cost-effective, contemporary, living, live/work, studio, and performance spaces for established and emerging artists. Held February 16, 2017. The public forum debates will be discussed in further detail in Tension (Finding) 03: Vital Information Was Convolutated or Inaccessible.

certain confines, government, corporate spaces, code, folks, whatever. We all have some very serious limitations. And yet I'm here, right?

Safety meant different things to different people, and developing, preserving, and sustaining arts spaces meant different things to the artists than it did to the real estate developers and the city agencies and elected officials. Pequeño highlights this tension: “I started a resurrected venue and turned it into a safe space for Black artists. So, it means a lot to me, and it means a lot to a lot of people. I have friends who can tell you countless stories about, like, how this place has been a safe haven for them - saved by the Bell, you know?” (Dinsmoor 2019) But the Bell Foundry was the safe haven that was condemned for life safety hazards and code violations. These contradictions have yet to be resolved.

Tension 02: Artists Did Not Believe That Protection Was About Life Safety; They Thought It Was About Gentrification

“In addition to affordability of space, other important factors draw artists to marginalized neighborhoods. Where many see blight and deficiency, artists see assets, opportunity, and potential for transformation.”
-Maria Rosario Jackson, “Developing Artist-Driven Spaces in Marginalized Communities”

The statements in the preceding section by artists and by city officials illustrate that perceptions of “safety” differ among participants within the urban social landscape. These differences complicated the objectives that the Task Force faced, and actually increased the threats to life safety. Paradoxically, given the real-life implications of this semantic conflict, this impacted the ability of the Task Force to engender trust amongst the constituents it was formed to serve. The research shows that safety is subjective, and its variation in meaning when not collectively understood can impede working towards collectively “safer” spaces. If artist-residents posited that the evictions weren’t about safety, and unrelated to the Ghost ship tragedy, they

believed that the evictions were alternatively carried out to advance the larger agenda of gentrification.

As with safety, variation in meanings, understandings, and implications of gentrification can fuel distrust, increasing the threat to life safety (Kaufman 2017). In the work of the Arts Safe Space Task force and in the aftermath of the evictions of the Bell Foundry residents, conversations and concerns about gentrification rippled throughout Baltimore City's arts and cultural ecosystem. It's usually hard to distinguish a victim of gentrification. People getting priced out of their neighborhoods is a common, pervasive, often slow-moving story, as is being looked at with mistrust by incoming neighbors. Artists in particular create beauty with few financial resources, only to have that aesthetic co-opted by capitalism. But gentrification isn't usually as directly fatal as it was in the Ghost Ship fire in Oakland in December of 2016, nor is it as visible as an eviction of Black and BIPOC artists from a prototypical warehouse art space, as happened at the Bell Foundry three days later. (Wingren 2016)

Lance Freeman's investigations in New York City have shown that there can potentially be value-added from gentrification for area residents who are able to remain in their transitioning neighborhoods. Those who can see and benefit from their neighborhood change over time are far less critical, skeptical, and distrusting of gentrification. (L. Freeman 2006) The Bell Foundry tenants and their supporters across Baltimore City's arts and cultural landscape, however, not only did not see the benefit of the gentrifying forces latent to the eviction, but also did not believe that life safety or protection was the driving factor behind the trauma.

This research reviewed primary source material, including newspapers, to collect real-time testimony regarding the arts and cultural community's positions and opinions regarding the threat to life safety versus gentrification as the root cause of the Bell Foundry evictions. Interviewees overwhelmingly corroborated what will be referred to as a "gentrification sentiment." In that, while no authority could directly declare that the evictions were about

gentrification (who in authority would?), if it looked like gentrification, and smelled like gentrification, and all actions were made by dominant parties or the gentry, then it's probably gentrification. The following section details some of these sentiments regarding the life safety or gentrification tension in artist run spaces in Baltimore City through the lens of the Bell Foundry evictions.



Figure 10: Group photo of Bell Foundry tenants and allies at the building for City Paper's cover story "Abused & Tired" (Photo by City Paper) (BARCO and Bonitz, Abused & Tired cover image, City Paper from ASTA APASO presentation 2017-2019)

The Artists: "It was obvious that the plan was to kick us out and sell the building for a high price – That's gentrification. That's how it works."

In the eight months he lived and worked there, Qué Pequeño said he paid just under \$300 a month to rent space at the Bell Foundry. (Case and Rector 2016b) "I found out the news yesterday at 10 AM when the fire Marshall showed up at the spot, demanding to be let in to investigate the area, which they deemed unsafe," Pequeño, Bell Foundry tenant recounted of the city inspectors' arrival. He continued,

I feel like the only way to fight back gentrification is to buy land, especially as a Black artist and Black creative. There aren't too many spots for us anymore. Ironic, because we are Baltimore. This is a predominantly Black city, but that doesn't change the fact that this is gentrifying. The majority of Baltimore and citizens are Black, which brings all this (Pequeño gestures around himself inside the Bell Foundry), which brings painters, which brings artists, R&B singers, rappers, ballet dancers, and we need spaces like Bell Foundry. This works. (Dinsmoor 2019)

Pequeño, who was still trying to find permanent housing at the time of many of these interviews, stated on the record on multiple occasions that he believes the shuttering of the Bell Foundry was the city's latest step toward gentrification. He wanted a personal apology from former Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake, and for the city to pay him and his fellow tenants' costs for displacement.

"I feel like me and my friends are being attacked for illegally taking up space in a warehouse, but the question they're not asking is why would we need to do that in the first place." Pequeño said. "How can we live up to code when people are ignoring us? [Community is] what the Bell Foundry served for a lot of us." Pequeño goes on to describe in a later interview that he was not surprised upon hearing the building was put up for sale for redevelopment, expecting whatever it turned into would be something unattainable for the arts, Black, BIPOC, and queer community of the former Bell Foundry – "something not meant for me, not meant for my friends." Pequeño goes on, "I've known since a week after we got evicted. It was obvious that was the plan: to kick us out and sell the building for a high price – That's gentrification. That's how it works." (Campbell 2017)

Elon Battle, a Baltimore City R&B singer (stage name :3LON) spoke publicly about his and his community's experience and insights on the Bell Foundry evictions as evidence of gentrification in an interview with the *Baltimore Sun* on the one-year anniversary of the tragedy:

Most of the artists I know don't trust the government. I feel like this was all done for profit, to make more money. They weren't really making that much money off that space from us just living there — not as much as they probably could if they made it into a commercial space. ... It's just sad that the one time we had a space full of majority [people of color], majority queer folk, [the city was] just not having it. They made sure they nipped it in the bud. (Case 2017c)

Battle also described how he sees a pattern in which officials use artists' "coolness" and credibility to market the city, but don't provide affordable housing so artists can remain in their neighborhoods, citing the \$1 million asking price of the Bell Foundry building and its lot — placed for sale in April 2016 by owners Calvert Lofts LLC and JBL Calvert LLC — as stark example. (Case 2017c) The belief that the city values profit or development over artists' livelihood felt particularly defeating to Battle, a sentiment that was reiterated by many Bell Foundry former tenants and performers, and members of the arts and cultural community writ large, especially as the Bell Foundry, as discussed in the previous section, was the rare inclusive space for the marginalized. (Case 2017c)

In December of 2016, local photographer and historical reenactor Wilson Freeman wrote in their *Nothing By Halves* online journal a detailed account of the Bell Foundry evictions and their relationship to gentrification and the rise of the Station North Arts and Entertainment district.

Freeman says:

The Bell Foundry is an amazing historical industrial building in the middle of what is arguably the fastest gentrifying neighborhood in Baltimore, Station North. It's next door to the CopyCat and the Cork Factory, and just two blocks away from the Charles Theater and the in-progress Parkway Theater. The building would make for a pretty great space for offices, restaurants, all sorts of higher-end commercial purposes, all of which would assuredly net the property owners much more money than they're currently making by renting to artists.

The current tenants don't really complain that the building isn't up to code, or that there are structural issues and fire hazards. And, until Station North started becoming "hip", there wasn't much financial incentive for the owner to fix them. However, leases are tricky things, and there's a chance that the owner may have had dollar signs in his eyes for a while, looking for a way to clear out the current tenants. And then along comes the Oakland fire.

The owner of the Bell Foundry can now (and last night did, with only an hour's notice) evict the current tenants under the guise of being concerned about their safety. He can even get the city to help him do it. Sure, the tenants can (and should) sue him for illegally and knowingly renting a space that isn't up to code, but where are artists going to come up with the money for lawyers? Justice is, sadly, unlikely. In the meantime, quite a few artists have lost their homes and studios, the rehearsal and storage space for one of the city's most beloved artistic institutions (The Baltimore Rock Opera Society) is imperiled, and yet another safe space for artists in the queer and POC communities bites the dust. Hopefully, it will all turn out to be an overreaction and the community there will be able to stay, but I'm doubtful.

We can't keep doing this, folks. Gentrification, especially this aggressive, underhanded form that we're more used to hearing about in places like NYC and San Francisco, is an unsustainable model for

development. Artists cannot continue to be the shock troops of urban development, pushed aside as soon as they have tipped the scales of a neighborhood from “sketchy” to “edgy” to “hip”. (W. Freeman 2021)

Like Pequeño, Freeman closes with a call to action to Baltimore’s city and citizenry. They lobby to be loud, to speak up, to make calls to the Housing Authority and council folk - anything that might encourage a reset of values in Baltimore City from profits to people. Baltimore City “has the potential to be a true center for creativity – both in entrepreneurship and the arts,” Freeman says. “But if we let greed and corruption dictate our development while we stand idly by, the only thing it will become a center for is the seizure of neighborhoods from the very people who made them great.” (W. Freeman 2021)

In a 2020 interview with *Document Journal*, artists of color discuss the ongoing tension between creativity and gentrification in a majority-minority city:

“Felix: The creative energy, that is currently unseen, is so powerful it feels like it’s going to burst. When it does, I think the attention it will bring will monetize itself and work for Baltimore, for the creatives who are here. Gentrification is happening. If some of that ‘positive attention’ comes to the black community, I think it’s going to energize the creative scene. The foundation here is from black artistry, from the jazz scene, with Billie Holliday and so forth. There was attention on these trailblazing artists back then, and it’s bound to come around again.

Jordan: The black community definitely put in the groundwork for creativity here. In the ‘80s and ‘90s it was grungy, but displacement and redlining within the city also inspired a lot of people to react through art. I think our generation is now piggybacking and refining that voice. We have a lot to say. It can be threatening to some people because our voice is very anti-establishment, it’s built upon a reaction to economic disparity and racism. I feel like the rebellion is going to become stronger as the city gentrifies. Still, we need a boost to our platform for it to continue developing, we need resources. It’s hard because this kind of artwork is not really commercially convenient, the art here is literally against the system.

Alonzo: There are so many different realities within the creative community that you can’t really speak for it as one entity. What I can say is I do think a lot of artists from here have created communities across these lines, though I’m not sure if anything or anyone is able to ‘surpass’ the realities of segregation in Baltimore as a whole. You can, however, experience the merging of worlds in the many venues which have cultivated creative energy and brought people together here.

In the past, there were places like The Paradox, where people from all over the city would come because they played deep house and Baltimore club music. It was under a highway and was a legendary spot. But they got bought out and replaced by Hammerjacks, which is not designed for the same demographic. There was also the Bell Foundry, a DIY art commune which was also shut down... Shutting these places down feels like an attack against Baltimore culture.” (Gioiello 2020)

Alonzo, in the above discussion, picks up on the attack on Baltimore culture as part of the gentrification process. While artists are often referred to as being the “shock troops” of gentrification, (Makagon 2010; Romero 2022) they are also – as the Bell Foundry evictions show – continuously on the defensive in the ongoing battle for territory.

“Arts and culture workers put a compelling face on the eviction crisis.”

It was not just the artists, but also scholars who identified the tensions in saying the Bell Foundry evictions were about safety versus the gentrification sentiment. Eva Wingren, a New Economy Maryland 2017 fellow at the Institute for Policy Studies, wrote *Gentrification Was the Killer in Oakland Fire* a few days after the evictions, and testified eruditely and passionately in front of the Task Force at the Public Forum on February 16, 2016. Wingren’s ongoing position is akin to Florida’s – that Baltimore needs its artists, especially if there is a desire to have art and vibrancy in a shrinking city, but her take is one of life-or-death contrary to Florida’s happy-happy-joy-joy. Where Florida posits that more coffee shops will attract creative industries, Wingren asserts that with gentrification and life safety issues colliding, “arts and culture workers put a compelling face on the eviction crisis, since Baltimore is using the arts as an engine of economic development. But many of the solutions are the same for artists as they are for any population facing housing insecurity: rent court reform, more robust eviction prevention assistance and permanent affordable housing.” (Wingren 2017) Wingren writes:

The Bell Foundry is in the Station North “Arts District,” meaning that the city is trying to capitalize on the concentration of art and artists in the area to bring economic development. The fact that the city is willing to spend police resources, which represent an enormous percentage of Baltimore’s budget, to evict the very people who are essential to their strategy of bringing an economically depressed community back to life, but not spend resources on addressing health, safety, and tenancy issues that might allow these folks to stay, lays bare the unsavory machinery of arts-based development: artists and other folks on the margins are not co-creators, they are the product being sold. ... The Ghost Ship tragedy shows us that the Triangle [Shirtwaist Factory Fire] legacy is incomplete, not only in terms of the literal upkeep of safety codes in factory buildings, but in terms of putting people before profits. And gentrification is tricky to fight. Because our cities need investment, community developers can find themselves participating in displacing those they are trying to help if they are not careful. ... What does it even look like to fight gentrification and improve safety at the same time?” (Wingren 2016)

Scholar Meghan Ashlin Rich of the Department of Sociology and Criminal Justice at the University of Scranton asks similar questions in *'Artists Are a Tool for Gentrification': Maintaining Artists and Creative Production in Arts Districts*. According to Rich, the influx of arts-themed development helps raise property values and spurs re-colonization of the Greenmount West neighborhood's large industrial buildings where the Bell Foundry was located, making it difficult for artists to find legal, affordable live/workspaces in the Station North Arts and Entertainment District. Citywide, illegal DIY artists' spaces were - and continue to be - increasingly scrutinized by city inspectors, thereby artists and other marginalized populations lose territory and feel that they are being used for capital interests. (Rich 2017)

Local scholars Frederick Tolle, Allison P. Chen, Daniel J. Barnett, and Edbert B. Hsu at Johns Hopkins University examined the catastrophe at the Ghost Ship in response to the Bell Foundry evictions in the institution's proverbial backyard, and their findings point directly at gentrification as the real cause of the fire at the Ghost Ship that killed 36, not the faulty wiring, not the landlord's negligence, not the illegal use as a music venue. They write in *Fire at the Oakland Ghost Ship Warehouse: A Disaster Life Cycle-Based Analysis* in the *American Journal of Disaster Medicine*:

Oakland has long been a haven for artists, and as a creative response to the increasing property values in the Bay Area, artists and other marginalized populations have turned to converted warehouse spaces for affordable housing such as at the Ghost Ship warehouse. By not addressing the many dangers of such illegally converted mixed-use cultural spaces, the underlying issue of widespread gentrification that drives people to reside under such precarious living conditions is relatively under-examined. If the affordable housing crisis remains unresolved, the arts community and other vulnerable populations will continue to be at risk of future catastrophes. The tragedy at Ghost Ship demonstrates the dangers that low-income communities in Oakland and others like it nationwide are experiencing. (Tolle, Mph, Chen, and Hsu, Md, Mph 2020)

As the aforementioned scholarship demonstrates, while correlation does not equal causation, the artists weren't necessarily wrong in their suspicions regarding gentrification being an underlying cause of the Bell Foundry evictions. In addition, the timeline of the property itself would go on to support their claims: immediately after the evictions, the Bell Foundry was listed

for sale at an asking price of \$1 million, purchased, and converted into The Foundry Lofts – luxury bohemian-inspired apartments, marketed to commuters from DC, being only minutes away from Penn Station.

The planning literature also supports the artists' claims regarding the Bell Foundry evictions as a highly visible instance of gentrification. As Sharon Zukin says in her seminal work *Loft Living*, “The conditions of creative artists are not valued. Culture takes second place to real estate. (Zukin 2014)” Karen Chapple and Shannon Jackson express concern over the arts and artists as instruments of gentrification, examining the tensions over the social uses of arts and the arts as commodifying neighborhoods. They suggest that planners avoid the instrumentalization and displacement of the arts in community development by not “ignoring plural voices, choosing to hear city fiscal imperatives rather than the needs of artists.” (Chapple and Jackson 2010)

Because the difference between threats to life safety and threats of gentrification were never directly addressed nor clarified by the Task Force, distrust manifested, and skepticism ran rampant across the very members of the community the Task Force was created to serve. In the Task Force's Public Meeting of February 16, 2016, Dan Deacon reminded the room that “it's really hard to get people who don't trust the government to trust the government.” Jurdan stated in the interview with Document Journal when speaking about Black artists in Baltimore City – the very demographic evicted from the Bell Foundry, “our voice is very anti-establishment, it's built upon a reaction to economic disparity and racism.” As artists and alternative, artist-run spaces are often inherently counter-cultural, as Jurdan describes – defining themselves in position counter to mainstream or normative thinking or existence – the target demographic of the Task Force was never fully convinced that the evictions at the Bell Foundry were solely about life safety, and not at all about gentrification. The 2019 report *Trust and Distrust in America* by the Pew Research Center supports this relationship of those who are generally less trusting as being less trusting of

government and institutional actors, with elected leaders being the lowest on the trust chart

shown below in Table 4:

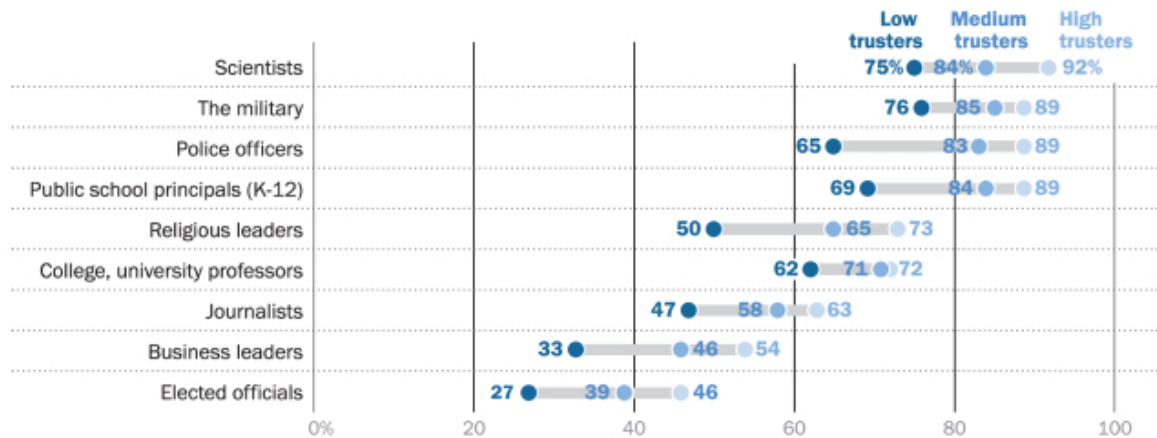
The *Trust and Distrust in America* report finds that:

Levels of personal trust tend to be linked with people’s broader views on institutions and civic life. The disposition of U.S. adults to trust, or not to trust, each other is connected with their thinking about all manner of issues. For instance, those who are less trusting in the interpersonal sphere also tend to be less trusting of institutions, less sure their fellow citizens will act in ways that are good for civic life and less confident that trust levels can rise in the future. (Rosenberg 2019)

Of over thirty artists interviewed for this research, all said that while they were optimistic about the work of the Task Force, they were skeptical throughout its existence, and never fully trusted that life safety - and not gentrification - was the driving factor in the work. In addition, all of the artist interviewees and 4 out of 5 of the arts service organization non-profit workers

Those with high personal trust have higher confidence in key leadership groups

% of U.S. adults in each group who have a great deal/fair amount of confidence that _____ will act in the best interests of the public



Note: The trust scale is built on questions about people’s general trust or distrust in others; their sense of the exploitative tendencies or fairness of others; and their assessment of the overall helpfulness or selfishness of others. For details, see Chapter 2 subsection “People sort along a continuum of personal trust.”

Source: Survey conducted Nov. 27-Dec. 10, 2018.

“Trust and Distrust in America”

PEW RESEARCH CENTER

Table 4: Those with high personal trust have higher confidence in key leadership groups

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Force as a whole, nor the local government, including elected officials and city regulatory

agencies. This distrust and skepticism will be discussed in further detail in Tension 05: Arts Spaces

Are Inherently Political. While there was a very real threat to the welfare of the tenants of the Bell Foundry, many did not believe this was the case. This tension led to ongoing distrust and jeopardized the ability of the Task Force members and city regulatory official to work with artists to make their spaces safe and code compliant.

Tension (Finding) 03: Vital Information Was Convolutd or Inaccessible

Information that could have immediately helped artist run spaces was messy or not clearly communicated. The research shows that the Task Force and City Agencies could not provide any clear reassurance or instruction to constituents on how to “be safe” or code compliant in their spaces.²⁴ Two lists – one, the subject of a debate at the February ASSTF Public

²⁴ For comparable justification of the fear this disconnect engendered in the arts community, see “Protecting Residents of Unpermitted Housing: How the Exigent Circumstances Standard Applies to Code Enforcement” by Chelsea Lalancette regarding balancing an affordable housing crisis with a need for safe residences in the post-Ghost Ship fallout. Lalancette explains the role of code enforcement gone awry in response to the stay on evictions in Oakland, a precursor to exactly what would happen in Baltimore a few weeks after:

Following the Ghost Ship fire, Oakland Mayor Libby Schaaf released an executive order, which laid out promising new policies to advance safety while minimizing evictions and displacement.[4] In what is at best a pattern of overcautious enforcement and at worst acts of corruption, city code inspectors have consistently failed to follow the order.[5] The executive order mandated that in cases in which an inspection of an unpermitted residence reveals no conditions that pose an “immediate threat to life safety,” the property owner should enter into a compliance plan with the city to cure code violations and secure necessary zoning permits rather than evict tenants.[6] Despite the executive order, inspectors issued notices of violations ordering landlords to discontinue residential use of unpermitted live-work units without citing life-threatening code violations, and in some cases without even seeing the inside of the building. Such Notices of Violation serve as de facto eviction notices, but the majority of notices made only brief, conclusory statements about code violations without any description of specific dangers. Despite the promises of the mayor’s executive order, evictions have continued, following orders by city inspectors that owners cease residential use of the building or face fines.[9] These Notices of Violation are a direct violation of the mayor’s executive order, which allows code inspectors to mandate eviction only when conditions at an unpermitted residence present an “immediate life hazard. “Some unfounded orders to vacate may also have been issued in bad faith; Oakland’s Public Ethics Commission recently found repeated acts of corruption and acceptance of bribes by at least one code inspector, and the Commission is now investigating complaints that another code inspector colluded with a landlord to push out tenants. (Lalancette n.d.)

Forum, and two, the Safe Space Checklist developed by the Task Force – are darkly hilarious examples of this disconnect.²⁵

“The List” Debate

As discussed in detail in the following section, a public forum hosted by the Task Force in February of 2017 to gather public feedback and clarify the intentions of the Task Force was anything but direct. Messaging and context that could have immediately contributed to understanding and increasing life safety was lost in translation, fueling rather than alleviating the tensions and precarity of artist run spaces. “The List”—the term that stakeholders used for a (possibly hypothetical) inventory of Baltimore arts spaces that were not code compliant—was an abstract symbol of precarity and vulnerability that has never been defined, despite the best efforts of the Task Force and good intentions of city regulatory agencies to meet artists and audiences where they are and support collective understanding. The List represents the buildings or properties that the fire marshal and building inspectors are going to inspect. The List represents risk and the potential loss of home and creative space. The List represents common nuisance complaints, 4chan-following alt-right neo-Nazis, and threats to personal and public well-being. To the fire department, The List was not a big deal, didn’t even really exist, and was nothing for the arts community to be concerned about. For the tenants of the Bell Foundry and other artists, The List is what led to their eviction, to the closure of their spaces, to their creativity ceasing. To the fire department, The List was ordinary. To the artists, The List was catastrophic. The List was an existential threat.

The following abridges - for emphasis and clarity - the debate over The List that took place at the ASSTF public forum between members of the Task Force and City Councilman

²⁵ Please see Forum for the transcript of “The List” debate at the ASSTF Public Forum and Appendix C for the full Arts Safe Space Task Force Report which includes the Arts Safe Space Checklist.

Ryan Dorsey, who was not on the Task Force but was attending the forum as a curious stakeholder²⁶:

Teresa Everett, Assistant Chief of Community Risk Reduction, Fire Department, Baltimore City Fire Department: Hi! I'm with the friendly fire department. Believe it or not, we are very friendly. I want to assure everyone here that there is no List of artist spaces. ... So, I just wanted to clear that up: there is no List.

Dan Deacon, Composer and Musician: I know a bunch of artist spaces that have been informed that they are up for inspection in recent weeks [since the Bell Foundry evictions] - so there is no List?

T.E. - The fire department only inspects if you are on The List - meaning if there is a complaint - but there is no List. Just to be clear, I don't think the fire department has, like, a dartboard with the word artists on it or anything like that.

D.D. - So our work is pointless because any space can get on The List that doesn't exist if there is a complaint?

T.E. - There isn't a List. There is just a List of inspections. It's not just artists, we treat everyone the same way.

D.D. - I don't think you're targeting artist spaces, but there is a List of inspections happening and our job is to advise the Mayor to do what Oakland did and not evict artists (eviction moratorium re. Imminent threat)

Councilman Ryan Dorsey - My office is getting calls from artists all over the City that they are about to be inspected because they are now on The List.

T.E. - People doing things they normally wouldn't do draws attention, so we have to make a List and come out to inspect. But there is no List. Just keep your spaces safe and it will be helpful to all. I do think we need to establish immediately, not within the span of several months, what to do if a space is in violation and to not have further Bell Foundries.

In the exchange over The List, the fire department genuinely attempts to assuage the artists' fears and insecurities but botches it so badly, The List became even more threatening and misunderstood by artists and the entire arts and cultural ecosystem. Artists who already feared for their safety and security now imagined that anyone could potentially be shut down or evicted simply by having attention drawn to them by a routine nuisance complaint. As such, artist run spaces who were initially curious about seeking support or clarification on the legality of their

²⁶ The complete, unabridged transcript of the debate over The List is attached in Appendix D: Transcript of "The List" Debate from the Arts Safe Space Task Force Public Forum.

space instead withdrew further underground – shuttering their doors and sheltering from any alleged action, visible gesture, or movements that might put them on The List.

The Safe Space Checklist

Cognizant of their error in the completely missed opportunity to educate and pacify the arts community’s upset at the public forum over The List debate, the fire department collaborated with members of the ASSTF Code and Regulatory workgroup to create another list. The collaborators worked diligently to produce a list that they were certain would heal all ills and educate artists on the many mechanisms by which they could make their spaces safer. So as not to be confused with The List, the team made sure to name this new, more productive list ‘The Checklist.’

The following includes and critiques the Safe Space Checklist not because it’s absurd or funny, but because the following represents an example of how well-intentioned experts and the community they are trying to serve simply are not using the same language when they discuss safety. The language of building and fire professionals is not the language of a recent college-graduate painter who is trying to throw a music show in their basement.

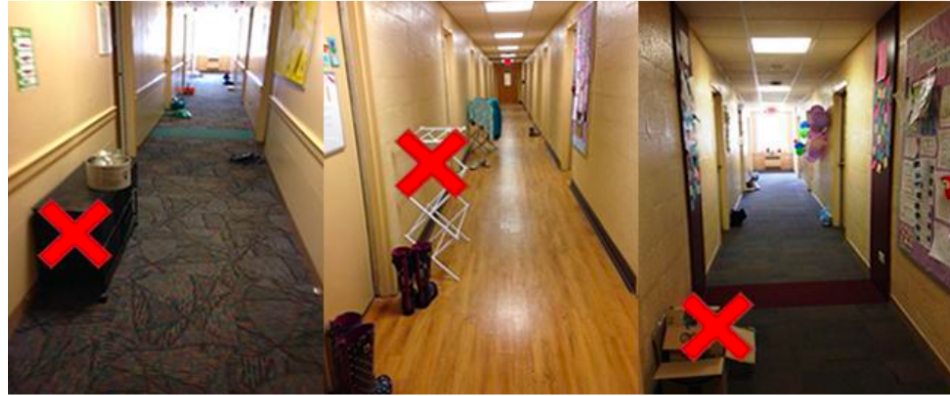
In The Checklist, action item Number 4 in the category ‘Electrical’ instructs that “the electrical service should be reviewed and evaluated to ensure it meets the maximum number of disconnects rule in NEC 230.71.” Under ‘Live/Work Units,’ Number 3 suggests “smoke detection in the live/work areas should be according to IBC 907 and NFPA 101 (Life Safety Code).” The Number 1 action item for artist run spaces to generally make their spaces safer according to The Checklist is to:

Provide fire evacuation diagrams for each floor to be posted in stairwells lobbies, and floor landings as a guide. Each building must also have a current and approved fire evacuation and preparedness plan that includes key elements such as paths to exits, sprinkler rooms, pulls stations, fire extinguishers and elevator control rooms, and electrical rooms. (Pugh, Mayor 2017)

The checklist does not explain what any of the industry specific jargon means (IBC stands for the International Building Code, NFPA is the National Fire Protection Association, etc.). Also missing is any indication about how to enact any of the requirements, almost all of which require highly skilled professionals to execute at significant cost. How would an artist run space know if their electrical service meets the maximum number of disconnects rule without hiring an architect and a master electrician? In addition, anecdotal evidence and the data collected by the Artists Needs survey indicate that the vast majority of artists do not own their space, meaning that all upgrades on the checklist would have to be made by their landlords. As such, there was little, if anything, on the entirety of the checklist the artists themselves could do to live more safely, aside from complying with the very first action item which helpfully suggested that they should simply already live in an existing code compliant and “safe” building.

The collaborators went out of their way to give extra attention and detail to the section of The Checklist covering Public Exit Corridors, Stairways, and Lobbies as egress spaces are some of the softest targets for preventable fire deaths. (See Figure 11 below for the egress corridor guidance.) The lack of clearly marked egress pathways directly caused the majority of the deaths in the Ghost Ship fire. As with the previous examples, all of the egress and assembly space recommendations for increasing life safety were geared towards developers planning for multifamily housing or mixed-use development projects, and aside from buying glow in the dark tape to apply to stairs, provided little actionable or understandable advice or guidance for broke artist tenants living in non-compliant factory lofts or rowhouses.

1. From the public lobbies and corridors, maintain clear egress access and egress pathways all the way to the Public Right of Way from exit access and exits in the public domain and common areas. Remove all obstacles and maintain continuity of width. Minimum dimension is 44". Provide markings on the floor where any confusion exists.



Remove all objects and clutter from egress corridors

2. Dead end corridors are not allowed greater than 20' in non-sprinklered buildings and 50' in sprinklered buildings.
3. Mark steps with self-luminous materials, if necessary.
4. Insure path of egress has emergency illumination.
5. Insure there is illumination at the point of exit discharge to the public way.



All exits need proper emergency exit and lighting.



Figure 11: Excerpt from the Safe Space Checklist (Pugh, Mayor 2017)

The fire department and Code & Regulatory workgroup collaborators staged scenes to demonstrate “unsafe” conditions in what could arguably be the safest artist space in Baltimore City – the newly constructed City Arts building. The laundry rack pictured in the center image above – akin to Jacob Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives* photographs of New York City slums in the late 1880’s which used laundry as a signifier of chaos and pestilence – was intentionally used to represent unsafe conditions as a specific reference to the tenants who hung their laundry outside

of the Bell Foundry, indicating to the world and to watchful code enforcement inspectors that they did in fact live in illegal and unpermitted space.

In addition to including a majority of action items that were nearly impossible to implement or understand, the Safe Space Checklist also was not widely distributed, and was referred to primarily only by the Task Force members who counted its creation as one of their major successes. Not publicly announced or distributed, the Safe Space Checklist could only be found one of two places, either on BARCO's real-estate development website on a page which has since been taken down, or attached to the Task Force's final Report, which was not publicly released until nearly nine months after the Safe Space Checklist was created. In addition, The Checklist was buried in the appendix of the Report and had no individual identity by which it could function or be accessed as a resource or reference. These examples live in the category of absurdist modernist bureaucracy literature, like *Waiting for Godot*, or *One Flew Over the Cuckoo's Nest*, a true Catch-22. The only way to be safe and get off The List was to not be on The List in the first place. Planners in Baltimore and other cities should learn from these findings that clearly articulating compliance with all legal and regulatory codes and processes in a way that is comprehensible and feasible is integral to developing, preserving, and planning for spaces of arts and culture.

Tension 04: There Was No Shared Understanding on the Arts Safe Space Task Force of the Role of the Task Force

Task Force members – while all have an unquestionable dedication to artists and arts spaces survival and their work on the task force – did not have a collective understanding of the role of the Task Force. This lack of collective understanding – despite shared dedication – watered down their effectiveness in inspiring confidence across the many publics who were looking to them for solutions.

Emphasizing the importance of the work of planning with and for artists, Sharon Zukin affirms that “rightly or wrongly, cultural strategies have become keys to cities’ survival. ...How these cultural strategies are defined and how social critics, observers, and participants see them, requires explicit discussion. (Zukin 2014)” In the following section, the tensions between safety and creativity are increased and evidenced largely by the very Task Force that was meant to alleviate those tensions. Lacking explicit discussion and explicit clarification, the constituents of the Task Force could not trust or rely on their representation and future being included in the cultural strategies of the Task Force’s considerations. The following section provides the explicit discussion Zukin evokes.

On Tuesday, February 16, 2017, the Arts Safe Space Task Force held a public forum in a large assembly room at Baltimore City’s War Memorial Building for the explicit purpose of serving as an introduction to the Task Force’s work and role and to gather comments and feedback from the many members of the city’s arts and cultural constituencies. Stakeholders, constituents, and local media attended the public forum and packed the seats early, although attendance dwindled as the session dragged on for over three hours. At this public forum, which was held in order to explain the role and charge of the Task Force to gain the support and trust of the community, the Task Force members showed that they did not have a collective understanding of the role and charge for the Task Force.

In his introductory statements to the room, Co-chair Jon Laria said the task force was “...trying to make some policy recommendations, short, medium, long term and in the short term we're also trying to get ahead of it, on top of these problems.” (Mayor’s Safe Art Space Task Force and CharmTV n.d.) Almost immediately, Stewart Watson – an artist, educator, and co-owner of Area 405, a flagship artist-owned and operated space who brought her Maryland Institute College of Art (MICA) students to the public forum – spoke up in direct disagreement with what Laria had just laid down while indicating she was part of the Artist’s Needs workgroup.

“We’re not creating developer models for people like the City to put into place. I think we are tasked with creating a series of resources that make the things artists are already doing safer.”

(Mayor’s Safe Art Space Task Force and CharmTV n.d.)

Watson seemed to think that they were only putting together some resource guides for whatever already existed. Elissa Blount-Moorhead, then co-chair of the Artist Needs workgroup agreed with Watson that already existing efforts and examples in Baltimore were important to the work, but stated that she didn’t know why the workgroup was called what it was called, and thought the idea was to deconstruct the way the task force was formed in order to amplify what was existing in Baltimore:

Can I just dispel the myth that this is a top-down process – at least for the Artist Needs group? I don’t know why it’s called that. But the group is very vocal artists and artist’s spaces that are operating in a sort of democratized, self-determined structure. What we are trying to do is deconstruct the way [the Task Force] was formed and just amplify what is existing. (Mayor’s Safe Art Space Task Force and CharmTV n.d.)

Finally, Dan Deacon was lobbying that the role of the Task Force was to push for and implement immediate – not patient – action to preserve and protect spaces, including issuing an eviction moratorium – because without immediate concrete action, all of the artist run spaces would be extinct by the time the Task Force’s work concluded:

Spaces are getting inspected by the fire department at a regular basis, and I understand that’s the job of the fire department, but I feel like the spaces that are being targeted are arts spaces, and we have to do something as a Task Force. Suggest to the Mayor immediately. By the time mid-year rolls around, we’re gonna be looking at many, many problems that have caused this Task Force to exist, and we will not have anything to do with our massive pile of solutions. (Mayor’s Safe Art Space Task Force and CharmTV n.d.)

While no one was really wrong, no one was entirely right, either. Task Force member Deacon acknowledged the tension that was rising between safety and creativity inside and outside of the room caused by the lack of clarity and lack of trust due to the lack of clarity, particularly calling out the deep institutional mistrust from marginalized communities and the arts sector at large. While the forum did garner many attendees, many for the arts community were missing, and the audience was largely white because, according to Deacon,

There's a great deal of institutional mistrust... I don't trust this task force. I think because people just honestly don't know what it is, and I think [trust] is an uphill battle for us. And as someone on the task force within the arts community, I think it would behoove us to better articulate exactly what we are.

I think there's a reason why a great number of spaces aren't here tonight; it's because they're afraid to come here, and they're afraid to come out and say 'I am with this space' because of just narcing on themselves. It's going to be a big effort on our part - and especially the organizations that want to help - to let people know that they are here to help and in a safe process. (Mayor's Safe Art Space Task Force and CharmTV n.d.)

Deacon harkened that the process itself could and should be used to instill trust in the work of the Task Force. Unfortunately, he was shot down in his suggestion for moving both immediately and at the speed of trust by co-chair Laria, who advocated for expediency – contradicting his earlier introduction about moving patiently and methodically – because,

Unfortunately, you know, trust is something that takes a long time to build up and the worst time to try and develop trust is in a crisis. And I would argue that that the, you know, what's happened at Bell Foundry was it was a crisis for sure for both the people who are directly affected. And for the city larger and it's created this effort which is, if not a crisis, certainly in a very urgent. Need to act. And as we've talked about that quickly, so we're struggling a little bit because I think it's hard, it's hard to develop that trust on the fly. ...

We're all going to have to trust each other as much as we can get as much information as we possibly we can try and make some good recommendations hopefully the mayor will see fit to implement them and then we can all work together to build or rebuild the trust that needs to happen so that this dynamic doesn't persist. But we kind of are where we are. (Mayor's Safe Art Space Task Force and CharmTV n.d.)

This somewhat defeatist we-are-where-we-are mentality would ripple through the Task Force as its efforts went largely dark after the public forum. The absence of the initial trust, plus the hiatus of the Task Force, drove more and more arts spaces deeper and deeper underground while the debates about the role, work, and final product of the Task Force still lingered.

These debates essentially boiled down to the non-dominant authorities (the artist representatives) versus the dominant authorities (the non-profit industrial complex (ASO's, real estate developers, anchor institutions, and Frank Lucas, the architect in the group) and the City representatives. The disconnect was a noticeable barrier to productivity, “and you’ve got Dan Deacon [just] trying to get a straight answer about whether they’re going to keep shutting down more places,” Melissa Webb said. (Block 2017)

Webb, a sculptor and curator, attended the public forum, and noted how even the seating arrangement of the room at the War Memorial building reinforced the divides (See Figure 12 on the following page for the author’s rendition of this spatial chasm). “I expected the task force to be speaking to us based on their discussions, as a unified entity. But what ended up happening was that it was obvious that that entity was still working out things amongst themselves, [that they] were not on the same page about the goals of the task force.” (Block 2017)



Figure 12: The Arts Safe Space Task Force Public Forum at the War Memorial Building annotated.

The visibility or lack thereof of the Task Force throughout its tenure continued to create tensions between the coexistence of safety and creativity. Essentially disappearing from the public eye after the February 2017 public forum, the Task Force was largely silent and invisible until the extremely delayed release of the recommendations Report in December of 2017. The impact of this seeming hiatus was well documented in local media, in which the frustration and loss of hope of the arts and cultural sector was widely expressed. The headlines of the local papers of record conveyed the feeling of confusion, with Wesley Case writing “A year after the Bell Foundry was shut down, Baltimore’s DIY arts scene remains in flux” for the *Baltimore Sun* and *City Paper’s*

Brandon Block releasing the cover story “In Hibernation: What happened to the Mayor’s Safe Art Space Task Force and how is the DIY scene carrying on?” Block described the atmosphere and connected it to the rising tensions between safety and creativity:

As artists wait for the task force recommendations, the city's DIY scene is stuck in a holding pattern, with venues temporarily closed or pushed even further underground and artists unsure if their space can continue or if they will need to make radical and costly readjustments to their spaces.

"Definitely it is much harder to book a warehouse-style space in Baltimore now without having the cops come or to have something get shut down or risk the people who live there in that space," says Chase O'Hara, one half of the R&B duo Chiffon. "It's a very real situation. Where a lot of these venues have been getting shut down, like even prior to the Bell Foundry, there were a lot of venues that were here that don't really exist anymore in the same sense."

...The concept of "safety" and its various meanings, especially for DIY residents, has been a crucial wedge in conversations about DIY spaces. Some artists feel that the undeniably important issue of "safety," now that it's been embraced and publicized by the city in a narrow way, has become a justification for a crackdown on DIY venues and, it seems, a potential for space and land grabs to court developers who have had their eye on Baltimore's arts scene for a while.

...Nuances and the philosophies of DIY, its autonomy and intentionality, naturally took a backseat for the task force's ultimate goal: getting a couple of spaces structurally sound and up-to-code safe to satisfy the city. (Block 2017)

Though the report was intended to come out in June, in November of 2017, Jeannie Howe, Chair of the Artists Needs committee gave an update on the status of the Report to *City Paper*, insinuating that while they were done, they weren’t really done, “We’ve all sent our recommendations in for the draft,” Howe confirmed at that time. “When we’re decommissioned, I feel quite sure that some of the recommendations that go to the mayor’s office will be about how this work can continue because it’s really complicated, there’s no one size fits all.” (Block 2017)

Jon Laria, Task Force co-chair, gave an update to the Baltimore Sun that non-ironically placed the blame of the delay on the success of the eviction moratorium they had lobbied the Mayor for early on:

Laria said “nothing dramatic” has held up the recommendations. For the past six months, he said, the task force has been in the process of “editing and formatting” the report, he said, while working with the mayor’s office to select a date to release the results publicly.

Laria, a partner in the Baltimore office of Ballard Spahr, said the findings will “absolutely” be released before the end of the year. He said the mayor’s executive order — a high priority of the task force — eased the urgency of the recommendations.

“It took some of that anxiety away, and to some extent, just blunted the momentum a little bit, to be frank,” Laria said. “The thing to do now is to finish the job by rounding out the recommendations to include all of the forward-looking things that we think the city can do to make Baltimore as hospitable and inviting for artists and the arts community as possible.”

Pugh said she never gave the task force a deadline. The priority, she said, is identifying long-term solutions based on the feedback and suggestions artists provided the task force. She said the recommendations will be released within weeks.

“The more people shared, the more we realized this was a bigger issue than we initially thought it would be,” Pugh said. “This is not about dates and numbers. This is about putting together a strategy that will work on behalf of that community.” (Case 2017c)

During this period around November as the one-year anniversary of the evictions and the Ghost Ship tragedy loomed, the Task Force’s real and perceived absence directly impacted the underground. “Artists say they don’t know whether city officials are trying to help them out or shut them down, and they’re concerned that their homes and studios could be closed next. This sense of uncertainty has pushed the scene further underground, [local artists] say.” (Case 2017c) *City Paper* details how artists reported how “everything stopped.” An email was sent to arts spaces in The Copycat building from the landlord saying “there will be a moratorium on all events. No more parties, no more shows, no more anything.” (Block 2017) Local websites that used to advertise shows and events across the underground arts scene were taken down. (Block 2017) The Station North Arts and Entertainment District indefinitely cancelled its popular art walk, Alloverstreet, "to better define its [sic] role in the current social climate" with a social media post that explained, "While the Mayor's Safe Arts Space Task Force reevaluates the needs of artist spaces in the city over the next few months, we will also reevaluate how we can support the work of independent artists through thoughtful programming and advocacy work." (Block 2017)

The void of arts programming was reminiscent and reiterative of the void between the parties serving on the Task Force. While co-chairs Laria and McNeil publicly expressed satisfaction at early efforts to bridge the divide between artists and city bureaucracies, Dan

Deacon – the biggest microphone of the arts community in the early days of the Task Force said he stopped being invited to the Task Force meetings. “I was pretty disenfranchised by the process, and just wanted it to go away,” Deacon said in September 2017. “A lot of people had good intentions, but I don’t know.” (Case 2017c)

Mayor Pugh botched the release of the Report, adding to the tensions that impacted the effectiveness of the Task Force’s recommendations and public perception. Though they were not invited to the press release for the Report’s release, Aran Keating of the displaced Baltimore Rock Opera Society and several other former Bell Foundry tenants crowded into the City Hall room anyway. Keating had said previously – showing the resilient nature of artists and their hope and skepticism at the same time, “Any resource you can throw at artists is going to get ... used. That’s what we do, we build things.” (Kaufman 2017) Keating was encouraged by the city’s responsiveness in creating the Task Force, but “until we see tangible recommendations something great could come out of it, and absolutely nothing could come out of it. (Kaufman 2017)” The Task Force did still serve as a national model for planning with and for artists, but if that is an example of what to do or what not to do requires further study and assessment.

Tension 05: Arts Spaces Are Not Just a Niche Cultural Concern; They Are Inherently Political

A vast majority of interviewees point a direct finger at the Mayoral administration of the time for the lack of success of the Task Force. This finger pointing, while aimed at Pugh, implicates the broader broken political systems in Baltimore – from our troubles with Board of Estimates and budgeting, to the Police State, to corruption at large. Nothing gets done in Baltimore without being subject to the currents of politics, and the tide is always shifting. Knowledge about how to navigate the political landscape is a key component to planning with and for arts spaces.

In May of 2019, I was with my boss – Amy Bonitz, President of the Baltimore Arts Realty Corporation (BARCO) - in her car as she drove us back to our office at the Motorhouse from a meeting downtown. As a non-profit, our work was mission-driven and much needed; at the time of this conversation, I had over 50 artist run spaces requesting technical assistance on issues from lease negotiations to design, financing, and code compliance. But the work was dependent on fundraising for our own salaries. We had just secured Community Development Block Grant Funding (CDBG) money from the Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) that would provide ongoing support for my position, so the conversation that ensued shocked and terrified me.

“Jack’s in; Braverman’s gonna be out. We’re done for. This work is over – it’s going to be impossible to keep working on arts spaces in Baltimore,” Bonitz said. “I’m sorry, Marian. I’m sorry for the whole city.”

I didn’t understand – we had just secured the CDBG funding. This was a vote of confidence. We had just come from a successful and productive meeting with DHCD to gain approval for code modifications for one of our Technical Assistance artist run space clients, moving them further down the path towards making physical upgrades that would increase the life safety and economic stability of their building. All these indicators seemed to point towards wins, towards job and work security, towards moving the needle. After writing them, we were implementing the recommendations of the Mayor’s Arts Safe Space Task Force to the letter. We were doing the work and doing it well. Artists and city officials trusted us. We were the bridge that was helping them trust each other.

On May 2nd, 2019, Mayor Catherine Pugh resigned amid scandal, and then City Council President Jack Young was sworn in as Mayor of Baltimore. If Mayor Pugh’s engagement with arts spaces was ineffective, Mayor Young’s approach was indifferent at best, and actively hostile at worst. Michael Braverman was the Baltimore City Housing Commissioner, overseeing the

Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD). Braverman, depicted in Figure 13 in front of a typical derelict block of Baltimore rowhouses, had been a long time agent and ally for arts and cultural projects in the city, was a true champion of the underdog, and was instrumental in enabling the work of the Task Force to move forward. Braverman was (and is) still a personal friend of both Bonitz and I, and there was many a project created, financed, and concluded over cocktails. The new incoming Mayor pushed him out in about a year.



Figure 13: Baltimore Mayor Bernard C. “Jack” Young has fired the city housing commissioner in the midst of a global pandemic that many warn could lead to an eviction crisis. Michael Braverman, whose last day was Friday, is shown in 2019 in East Baltimore. (Taylor 2020)

“There is no political will. Without that, we have nothing. Arts spaces are dead.” Bonitz explained:

Braverman is willing to be exploratory and had the power to do so because of his tenure. His successor is a follow-the-code-to-the-letter type. He’s not creative in his interpretations, and he thinks these spaces are deathtraps. Jack’s always had it out for Braverman, and he’s not going to touch anything from the Pugh Administration; he’s going to distance himself from everything she did as far as possible. Honestly, everyone is. All our funders are already pulling out because the philanthropic community won’t fund when there’s no political will. It’s a recipe for disaster.

On August 21, 2020, with the pandemic raging, Mayor Young fired Michael Braverman, whose career working in Baltimore spanned more than three decades. (Richman 2020) Bonitz had seen the future. She arranged to step down as president of BARCO, and we navigated moving the CDBG funding to a partner non-profit organization to support architectural concept design phases for artist run space projects in need. In June of 2019, I was out of a job, and Baltimore City no longer had any dedicated staff in any sector with long-term security working to implement the recommendations of the Arts Safe Space Task Force²⁷.

Interviews revealed that I was not alone in losing personal, professional, and emotional security and hope over the demise of the Arts Safe Space Task Force's efforts due to the political currents shifting. One Task Force member and life-long public advocate passionately shared:

I honestly have P.T.S.D. from the whole experience. Not because the work that we did was bad or traumatic, even though it dealt with traumatic things, but because the Mayor shit on all of our efforts and then got arrested. I'd still be working on arts spaces to this day if it weren't for the incompetency of the Mayor. (A. T. Representative 2022)

The artists – especially those most directly affected by the work of the Task Force and even more so by its demise, often were still too psychologically and emotionally scarred to speak at length or in detail about all they had lost due to the political crisis on top of the loss of their network and community of artist run spaces. Those that could had turned heavily critical of the Task Force and Pugh in particular, and like the Task Force member above, spoke impassionedly:

Mayor Pugh sucked. This whole effort that seemed like a PR campaign for her at the time would have actually been good if she wasn't such a shit-show. It really could have helped the City and artists. I mean, I can't even remember the last time Baltimore's mayor wasn't a shit-show, and I've been here 10 or more years. But to go down over children's books? Come the fuck on. (A. A. Representative 2022)

Interviewees for this research were not told the anecdote above. However, they were asked “why was the work of the Arts Safe Space Task Force not successful?” Or, “what tensions are there

²⁷ Insert Table of my ASTA projects and the impacts of the loss of the ASTA program, the pandemic, and the Ghost Ship on their sustainability – or add to Appendix? Need to quantitatively show the impact these decisions had on arts spaces & I can quantify this.

between safety and creativity in Baltimore City?” Out of 98 total conversations/interviews, all of the respondents blamed politics, in particular former Mayor Catherine Pugh.

One community and economic development practitioner expressed the impossibility for progress in planning for or executing initiatives that developed or sustained artist run spaces on their path to code compliance:

We would be a lot further along by now if not for the last few Mayoral administrations. It's really frustrating when you have so much support from the State and from the philanthropic and private sectors, but the local administration just cuts off their nose to spite their face. (A. C. Representative 2022)

A representative of the local government echoed the frustration and tension between developing safe and creative spaces. As discussed above, when there are already so many existing tensions at play between safety and creativity, “it’s super hard to have impact when the person or administration that put the initiative out there literally went through a lapse that resulted in a mental break-down while serving and then culminated in their leaving the office, due to having been arrested.” (A. L. Representative 2022) The interviewee’s statement, while directed at Pugh, implicated the larger legacy and systemic problems of corruption amidst Baltimore City’s elected leadership. Just twenty-four months after the executive order that stayed evictions of artist run spaces was issued, Mayor Pugh became the third Mayor of Baltimore to leave office under a cloud of scandal within the last decade and was later sent to federal prison.²⁸

²⁸ In 2019, the New York Times reported of Pugh’s resignation:

After weeks of mounting pressure, Mayor Catherine Pugh of Baltimore resigned on Thursday amid a widening scandal involving hundreds of thousands of dollars worth of children’s books that she wrote and that the University of Maryland Medical System paid for while she was serving on its board of directors.

Her resignation comes days after the Baltimore City Council proposed amending the city charter to make it possible to remove her, and after the F.B.I. raided her two homes and her office at City Hall.

Ms. Pugh stepped down from the hospital network’s board, which she had served on since 2001, but she had resisted calls to step down as mayor. She has been home on medical leave for weeks. Her lawyer told reporters previously that she was too ill to make decisions. Bernard Young, president of the Baltimore City Council, has been serving as acting mayor and will complete the rest of her term. (Stockman 2019)

In her resignation statement as read by her lawyer, Pugh herself acknowledged the absurdity and the tragedy she had caused. “I am sorry for the harm that I have caused to the image of Baltimore and the credibility of the office of the mayor, (Stockman 2019)” she said.

Baltimore’s political system that impacts community and economic development - and as shown above, gentrification’s shadow over artist run spaces – did not start nor stop with Pugh. Levine details how, since the 1950’s downtown redevelopment has been the ‘cornerstone of economic development’ utilized by not only Baltimore City, but all Frostbelt cities. In 1981, Time



Figure 14: Master Planner James Rouse - credited with the transformation of Baltimore's Inner Harbor - on the cover of Time Magazine, August 24th, 1981. (TIME 1981)

magazine heralded Baltimore as the “Cinderella City” for its service as a model of adopting neoliberalist mechanisms to revitalize downtowns (Levine 1987; Time Magazine 1981). Instrumental to these practices and policies was former – and quite beloved by history – Mayor William Donald Schaefer. His efforts contributed to pushing Baltimore to be the retype of the “dual

city²⁹” as discussed in the introduction – ‘a city of haves and have nots.’ (Levine 1987) Under Schaefer, “downtown redevelopment would now become the central component in a comprehensive “pro-business” economic development strategy aimed at enticing corporate investment in a restructured Baltimore. (Levine 1987)” Levine details how Schaefer’s initiatives increased the potential for corruption in city officials and put power in the hands of corporations for political decision making:

Schaefer created a kind of Baltimore, Inc.: an urban redevelopment machine, fueled with public dollars, seeking to leverage private capital by offering numerous incentives and profit opportunities. Building on the CCIHM model, he erected a network of 24 quasi-public corporations designed to entice investment. These corporations were dubbed by critics as Schaefer’s “Shadow Government” because of their explicit purpose of shifting redevelopment decision making away from the city council to quasi-public entities controlled by the mayor and his developer allies. Credited with putting Baltimore on the “leading edge” of U.S. cities offering investment incentives, the “quasi’s” were designed to improve the city’s business climate by packaging and helping finance redevelopment projects with speed, flexibility, and minimal public scrutiny.

Like former mayors Dixon and Pugh, Schaefer was publicly open about his business dealings and friends. “Baltimore wants you so badly, we’ll let you write your own terms” Schaefer told his private-interest community (Goodman 1979; Levine 1987).

This pattern of deferring to business or corporate interest, while potentially seeming like a tangent, is the direct lineage of political policy that created the tensions in safety and creativity that resulted in the evictions at the Bell Foundry. The Baltimore concept of the public-private

²⁹ “The *Dual City* has led to the crisis of the traditional social division inherited from the stage of the welfare state and characterized by the ruling of an immense middle class with slight variations upwards and downwards. At the moment the upper class has increased spectacularly with the appearance of the “nouveaux riches,” people from all walks of life who have reached the top as a result of very diverse economic activities. Between the upper and the middle class yuppies have created a niche; in cities such as New York or Los Angeles they may represent as much as 30% of the population. They are followed by the middle class, which has been drastically reduced, and the lower class which is experiencing the opposite process. The last step of the flattened social pyramid of the *Dual City* is made up of the “new poor,” former workmen expelled from the work market by the process of deindustrialization and shut away in urban ghettos where they are trapped owing to their difficulties in achieving access to education and new technologies.

The bipolar essence of the *Dual City* is reflected in urban space, which neo-Marxist city theorists have identified as an active part of social segregation. The association of highly qualified urban areas with others where an unprecedented physical decadence prevails constitutes the visual expression of the phenomenon of the *Dual City*.” (Atributos Urbanos n.d.)

partnership in 1987 was that “private interests determined the policy agenda, while the public role would consist of providing financial support and ‘...Condemnation, relocation of tenants, building of parking structures, changes in streets - all the things that a developer can’t do alone.’ (Gunts 1985; Levine 1987)” Since Shaefer’s term, Baltimore City’s neoliberal policies of neglect for some and power for others directly led to the tragedy of artist run spaces. By not equitably distributing redevelopment, by not democratizing the redevelopment agenda-setting process, and by elevating Florida’s creative class to be the most attractive to industry instead of rethinking the notion of ‘competitive advantage,’ Baltimore city politics has invested in a strategy that doomed the Bell Foundry before it was even an arts space.

This legacy of corruption (at worst) and incompetence (at best) continues at the City Council level as well. In a direct safety vs. creativity example that brings the politics and the timeline back to the Bell Foundry,

Kate Jordan, senior vice president of the commercial real estate brokerage Lee & Associates and a longtime resident of Baltimore, said the commercial leases described by [Bell Foundry owner Joe] McNeely sounded "pretty normal" in terms of putting the onus for obtaining permits on the tenants, but that "most responsible landlords are actively involved in making sure that [tenants] aren't doing anything illegal in the space."

For good or bad, she said, landlords and tenants in old buildings being repurposed and rented cheaply in downtrodden neighborhoods often have a "wink, wink" understanding that small code violations will be overlooked. But, she added, there should never be compromises when it comes to matters of safety.

"Hopefully the good that will come out of all of this is people will realize the importance of following those rules," she said. Others said the city should have stepped in long ago.

City Councilman Carl Stokes, who represents the district, said the Bell Foundry has been "an ongoing problem" for years, and that it was "actually a little bit unfortunate that the city let it go this far" despite his passing along complaints from other neighborhood residents for years.

"We know that the building wasn't zoned for living, but I think in some sympathetic sort of way the city was allowing that to happen — which was endangering lives," he said.

Stokes said the fact that people were living in the building "was evident from seeing clothes hanging out the window drying," even though the building was not zoned residential. He also said housing officials told him they found "a heating system with no ventilation" in the building during the inspections on Monday, meaning "folks could have died from carbon monoxide poisoning, the building could have blown up."

Carl Young Stokes has been the City Council representative of District 12 for six years, since March 8th, 2010, and of District 2 from 1987-1995. (“Carl Stokes, City Council, Baltimore, Maryland” n.d.) He tried and failed to run for Mayor twice, coming in fifth place behind Pugh in 2016. (“Carl Stokes (Maryland Politician)” 2022) When he says that the Bell Foundry had been “an ongoing problem for years, and that it was “actually a little bit unfortunate that the city let it go this far,” he is implicating himself. Carl Stokes was the city. His unwillingness to take responsibility, to understand that the larger patterns of political neglect and malfeasance represent core tensions between safety and creativity in Baltimore City’s artist run spaces, is telling. Upon her resignation, at least Former Mayor Pugh apologized for her actions or lack thereof. Pugh’s resignation statement is a recommendation and a summary of these findings, of the political tensions between safety and creativity’s coexistence: “Baltimore deserves a mayor who can move our great city forward. (Stockman 2019)”

Part 05: Recommendations & Conclusions

The following recommendations are inspired by a complex combination of analyzing and compiling data collected throughout this thesis process, from discoveries made in the findings above, from personal and professional experience working in Baltimore City to implement the recommendations of the Arts Safe Space Task Force, from the work and results of not only other cities’ responses to the Ghost Ship and Bell Foundry tragedies, but also Baltimore’s own successes and failures, and from the scholarly literature that supports and debates artists role in community and economic development. As with my design and development of the Arts Space Technical Assistance program, I approach the recommendations applying the same core principles with which I approach my classroom; as an educator, my methodology of engaging students in their independent practice is broken down into the following core concepts: Support the project, Support

the work, Support the individual, Invest in exchange, Follow opportunities. (Glebes 2018) As a planner and as a teacher, I aim to instill this same respect for, and an engagement with, diverse disciplines, opinions, and methods; maintaining and nurturing the community's or the artists' ability to question—and to make—their own place and time. (Glebes 2018) The bulk of this paper has sought to address the research question, 'why are artist run spaces under threat in Baltimore City? What are the tensions between safety and creativity's coexistence?' In the following recommendations, paradigms and possibilities are posited that address the research questions: *What possibilities exist for arts spaces to be safe? How can safety and creativity coexist in Baltimore City artist run spaces?*

Recommendations

Create New Paradigms

[Baltimore needs] something new, something that hasn't been done here. I think the Mayor is looking for new, novel...ideas. Relatively low-risk and potentially high-reward ideas are really something we should be focusing on.

Living in an ideal world, what would you provide for people in these categories? No judgment — just put it down. Then we'll figure it out, like, 'Well, that's desirable but practically impossible.' There will be some of those. Hopefully there's enough stuff in the middle that's meaningful and doable." — Jon Laria, Arts Safe Space Task Force Co-Chair

No idea is too small. No idea is too outrageous. — Frank McNeil, Arts Safe Space Task Force Co-Chair (Case 2017a)

In 2004, Donald Rumsfeld sent troops into the Iraq war unprepared for battle saying, “You go to war with the Army that you have, not the Army you might want to or wish to have at a later date. (*The New York Times* 2004)” Planning for arts and culture with a feasibility-oriented or “army that you have” mindset is a recipe for maintaining the status quo. The Arts Safe Space Task Force members and much of the arts and cultural community approached the charge with a deficient-mindset, with a Richard Florid-ian utilitarian understanding of the value of arts and culture, with a planning from scarcity rather than planning for assets approach. Understanding

constraints and challenges is important, but there are always opportunities to ask if those challenges and constraints should have even been there in the first place.³⁰

In order to successfully plan for and with arts and culture, McNeil and Laria's encouragements must be harnessed, and a transformative imaginary must be embraced. We must enter the fray prepared to dream, to unlearn, to be curious. No idea is too small, too outrageous, when envisioning answers and solutions to the fundamental research questions of not only this thesis paper, but also of the Task Force: What if we lived in an ideal world? How can creativity and safety coexist in Baltimore City artist run spaces?

Ensure That There is Both Community and High-Level Buy-In

Buy-in or lack thereof by Mayor Catherine Pugh and subsequent administrations proved to be a key factor in building and sustaining the work on arts safe spaces. All players - but especially the mayor - were crucial in lending credibility to the initiative and drawing participation from the community across the arts and cultural sector. City-support was also vital to building and sustaining community interest and cooperation from the grassroots to the non-profit to the anchor institution.

Buy-in was also an essential component in securing funding from grant-making or lending institutions. As the buy in from the mayor, from the media, and from the publics the work served for prioritizing high-risk spaces of arts and culture waned, so did the staff time and dollars dedicated to resolving the tensions between safety and creativity. Once the ASSTF disbanded, level of support from the contributing members and agencies subsided. Had the ASSTF continued, or even reformed, after the administration change, the initiative may have retained or rekindled its momentum at a point when capacity and morale was at a low City-wide. After being

³⁰ Max Libroion's *Pollution is Colonialism* – why would we even ever think it was okay to pollute?

elected mayor after Young, the incoming Brandon Scott administration brought some of the arts and cultural sector back together to serve on his transition team, but this is more a case of rounding up the usual suspects than ensuring continuity.

In order to support the coexistence of safety, buy-in from all sectors must remain consistent and robust. Funding must be made available across scales and with low to no strings attached for artist run spaces with demonstrated sweat equity and social capital or creative placemaking credentials for capital improvements, emergency small-scale hazard mitigation, and ongoing maintenance and sustainability. These funding mechanisms must come from a diversity of sources that includes government and philanthropic giving, with low-interest or forgivable loaning options available from the private financing sector.

Artist and activist Duane “Shorty” Davis attended some of the early Task Force meetings to have his voice heard by co-chair Frank McNeil, a representative of a major bank that provides financing and grants to arts organizations in Baltimore City. Davis reminded McNeil, and reminds these recommendations, that,

...the city has already provided tens of millions in funding for developers of Port Covington and Harbor East. ‘Why can’t you reinvest that...money into this room? You’ve got powerful foundations and other things like that that invest in the artistic community.... Bank of America, PNC and these banks in here in Baltimore need to reinvest in the people of Baltimore instead of the billionaires in Baltimore.’ (E. McLeod 2017a)

Like Duane “Shorty” Davis, former Bell Foundry tenant and artists suggests the development or redevelopment of artist run spaces is an imperative to not only sustaining the counterculture, but also responding to the traumas inflicted on the community by the Bell Foundry evictions and the Ghost Ship fire. Butch Dawson elaborates on this grief and gap and need for city and foundation investment a year after the evictions,

I feel as though like [] in the art scene especially with a lot of colleges and a lot of those foundations coming up, we're seeing a lot of places and areas being gentrified. I just want someone, some official in the city, just to make some kind of space where it's [] affordable living, affordable space. ... This change needs to happen where all of this is going down. ... That's the only way to build this community in a culture and make it more stronger, kind of like the safe haven [the Bell Foundry] was. Just like the place ...I miss. (Case 2017c)

Ensure continuity and buy-in at all levels, including political will and from the arts and cultural community. Listen to the artists. Fund the artists. Continue to support and plan for artists. They are the experts of their own domain when planning for and sustaining artist run spaces. In addition, radicalize the funding pipeline. Get money to people and places that need it immediately. Consider sweat equity and social capital – value that is not considered in traditional financing or real estate development sectors – as mechanisms and indicators of wealth generation.

Make It Sustainable, Have the Right People in the Room, & Earn and Deserve Trust

Aaron Maybin, a painter and poet, attended the first several task force meetings, but was put off by the panel's construction — in particular its lack of Bell Foundry tenants. (McNeil said the mayor's office chose the members of the task force.)

“What you didn't have was the interest of the community that they're saying all of this grandstanding is supposed to be for,” Maybin said. “Look at what they were saying they were trying to do, and the people that they included at the table, and tell me how that was supposed to get done.” (Case 2017c)

Overwhelmingly to its detriment, interviewees note that the response, trust, and involvement in the Arts Safe Space Task Force and any collective effort to implement the recommendations waned over time. This was markedly noticeable at the level of the Mayor's Office and other City Agencies whose role had never become clear. Interest at the City level went unaddressed by agencies formerly active in the ASSTF due to leadership and staff turnover, due to the impossibility of changing or altering building code or zoning laws, and due to the lack of communication across agencies and the public/private/sectors. Many in the community and economic or real estate development sectors posited that this was directly due to the loss of Michael Braverman, who had been a champion of working with arts spaces before and after the evictions at the Bell Foundry. A Memorandum of Understanding or interagency agreement must be put in place to clarify the implementation of the ASSTF Recommendations and the

Moratorium on Evictions. Lacking that, clear directives issued from the Mayor, City agencies, the private/public sectors, and artists themselves, would have been helpful in ensuring continuity over terms beyond administrations, a vital component of and place-based work with long term goals.

The gulf that exists between the artists and the city bureaucrats – those that operate “outside the margins” and those that “create parameters and enforce them” (Case 2017c) needs to be acknowledged and minimized. As the dominant authority, city officials and regulatory agencies have to work harder to engender and ensure trust from their constituents, the have-nots, the counterculture. “You can’t expect any trust to be there,” Maybin said of the Task Force. “The city hasn’t done anything to deserve that trust. (Case 2017c)” Even Kelly Kahn, Policy Director for Arts Spaces for Oakland said that Baltimore needed to do better at building genuine connection with the arts and cultural community. “Cities like Oakland and Baltimore probably do have to overcome a lot of mistrust,” Kahn said. “It requires a whole new way of thinking and working, and it takes a while.” (Case 2017c) Establishing a foundation of trust is patient and necessary work when planning with and for artist run spaces.

Involving the community is paramount, and while the Task Force did involve multiple opportunities to open their meeting space to public voices, there is no concrete evidence that community suggestions were included directly in the final recommendations. Anecdotally, all the members of the Task Force internalized the thought that they were serving as the designated industry professionals that represented the community, and therefore held the most applicable knowledge that could serve the cause. “A profession’s legitimacy rests on its knowledge.” (Innes 1995) However, to continue to borrow from Innes and *Planning Theory’s Emerging Paradigm*, “the study of practice shows that what ordinary people know is at least as relevant as what is found through systematic professional inquiry, but we have no professional standards to evaluate what ordinary people know.” (Innes 1995) To plan more holistically and for artists, artists must be considered the professionals in their field that they often are, and ordinary people and their

opinions must be included and evaluated at the same levels that the professional or selected members are. To borrow a recommendation from Maybin, “You’ve got to go out and find these people, and it will be to your benefit. These people are brilliant. We have some of the most intelligent, intellectual minds in the world in this city right now. (E. McLeod 2017a)” In planning with and for artists, build a coalition, build trust, and keep both ongoing.

Establish A Dedicated Liaison in City Government: “Arts Tsar”

Frequent turnover in City and quasi-city agency staff devoted to working on arts and cultural issues has led to a lack of clarity in roles and communicated the lack of political will for sustaining arts and cultural sectors. In order to navigate bureaucracy and streamline communications and clarity, partners on the ground require a direct line to access City agencies and mechanisms. The creation of a city liaison or “Arts Tsar³¹” would communicate that sustaining arts and culture in Baltimore City is a real, focused program and that constituents have someone looking out for them at the political level. The “Arts Tsar” would be someone to talk to in person who understands local issues and who has responsive connections to City, State, and potentially federal resources to help find and provide information on how to apply for and get resources for arts and cultural communities. A role like this is key to ensuring continuity of services, Kahn said, and to make sure the “local government has advocates for the creative class on staff — the type of officials more interested in finding solutions than simply enforcing rules that weren’t created to address communal living and workspaces.” (Case 2017c) Finding the right person to fit that role is a challenge, however, as Kahn elaborates, “There’s a lot of people who just want it to be super black-and-white, and then there’s not a lot of wiggle room for problem-solving and creativity.” (Case 2017c)

³¹ The term “Arts Tsar” came directly from several interviewees, who used the term repeatedly throughout the conversations. The Task Force report refers to a similar recommended role as an “Ombudsman.”

Provide Technical Assistance, Public Education, and Clear Communications

Technical assistance was mentioned repeatedly as a need that has largely gone unmet in not only the Task Force's work in Baltimore City, but also in many other places grappling with a post-Ghost Ship landscape. After the death of BARCO's ASTA program, there is no robust technical assistance available to arts spaces in Baltimore City despite the ASTA program's proven track record of success.³² Technical assistance provides planning knowledge to artists and others who otherwise lack access to expertise. As such, a fully funded and resourced technical assistance program is still needed in not only Baltimore City but beyond.

Clear and consistent messaging and information sharing is vital to planning with and for arts and cultural sectors. Training in communications and media relations regarding explaining the ASSTF initiative would have been helpful for all of the members and associates serving on the Arts Safe Space Task Force. The lack of cohesive messaging reflected the Task Force's internal disconnect on understanding the role and work of the Task Force. For example, there was consistent difficulty explaining what the eviction moratorium or recommendations meant to not only the public, but also amongst the city regulatory agencies whose job it was to enforce the law—and just as importantly, what it did not mean—to residents, potential partner organizations, and artists in the broader area. An ongoing Technical Assistance program should pick up where the Task Force left off when it disbanded, would navigate the unique complexities of each arts space that might be covered under the eviction moratorium, and would work directly with city agencies and the arts space's constituents toward a resolution. The technical assistance program could also provide a public education campaign to translate and communicate specificities to the public to raise awareness.

³² The Neighborhood Design Center's Arts Space Technical Assistance Program which I helped establish and develop prior to COVID19 focuses its support to arts spaces solely on architectural and design related services.

As noted in the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem, public education is paramount. Artists need to be informed of the very pressing impact code and life safety regulations can have on their day-to-day and creative survival. In addition, Technical Assistance can provide information on the complex and simple constructs of the building and zoning codes, a niche industry knowledge topic that has widespread implications. Furthermore, a wide-reaching public awareness campaign successfully deployed can encourage the arts and cultural community to get involved with the political landscape –by voting, or attending neighborhood community association meetings – in order to stay connected and informed on pressing issues in their locality. Lastly, artists and creatives are frequently stereotyped as being cavalier or footloose when it comes to understanding and practicing safety. Artists must value their own and others’ safety as much as they value creativity in order for safety and creativity to coexist in artist run spaces.

Provide More Visible ‘Quick-Wins’ and Ongoing Tangible Resources

Oakland’s interagency and community led fire safety task force was highly visible and never disbanded. Issuing memos on progress and audits of hurdles, this collaboration continued to do the work, and visibly.³³ To better communicate the value of the work of the Arts Safe Space Task Force or work like it in the future, and to build and maintain trust across constituencies, more visible “quick wins” and tangible resources should be shared along the process. While Oakland’s work was ongoing, it touched on scales large and small, and tackled systemic issues but also immediate challenges and opportunities. Sharing these “quick wins” engendered trust and confidence across all constituents when the benefits were neither immediate nor tangible at the outset. In contrast, hibernation in Baltimore helped no one, and led to an increase in tensions between safety and creativity.

³³ See Appendix A: Comparison Cities References & Resources for 1- and 5-year Ghost Ship anniversary memos from the Oakland task force.

One of these quick wins would be to simply reinstate the Mayor’s Task Force on Safe Arts Space in Baltimore City, and to keep working on artist run spaces at the political level – to show that there is political will to support arts and cultural spaces. Community and philanthropic support will follow. In auditing the outcomes of the Promise Zone program nationwide, planners emphasized that,

...there has to be a promise of tangible resources at the end of this process. Federal grant dollars, training, VISTAs, and staff attention have to appear during the process or else the very busy partners will drift away. The Stone Soup approach can work up to a point, but eventually, someone has to come up with the carrots, onions, beef, and salt, or you are just left with a well-boiled pot of water that nourishes no one. (Zapolsky et al. 2019)

This work has to be formalized and salaried – at the city level and in the non-profit sectors in order to have long-term dedication and success.

In addition, unlike the federal Promise Zone initiative or Oakland’s fire safety collaboration, the work of the Arts Safe Space Task Force was never formally audited for success, or for failures. A comprehensive examination of the work to date – and its outcomes – would be a highly visible win in a post-Ghost Ship landscape. For example, the recommendations and findings of the *Report of the Mayor’s Arts Safe Space Task Force* was included in major City policy plans after its release, including but not limited to the City’s Community Economic Development Strategy (2022), the Baltimore City Sustainability Plan (2019), Brandon Scott’s Mayoral Transition Team Report (2020), and the ongoing updates to the Baltimore City Comprehensive Plan (2021-present). These inclusions were never publicly celebrated, and are essentially buried in city planning and policy documents that are not widely read by the arts and cultural community. These reports and plans should not only be celebrated, but also immediately implemented, especially as they all place the issues of arts and cultural spaces and producers alongside systemic issues like housing, environmental equity, education, and social and civic services. The plans approach the arts with a “yes, and” mentality, rather than as “either, or” or as special treatment. Baltimore City’s policy reports are a civic and political statement that art and artists matter and

culture is equally important as transit or public safety. Further, assuming the plans can dictate city spending allocations, our budget can be a reflection of valuing and planning for arts and culture and artist run spaces.

Like the invisibility of the planning efforts that have adopted the work of the Task Force, the arts and cultural sectors – especially independent artists and artists run spaces – are notably invisible in available data collection and analysis. Ongoing data needs to be collected to better understand the needs and assets of the arts and cultural sectors. Ongoing data collection like Seattle’s *Cultural Space Inventory* establishes visible dedication and a safe place for underground artists to express their presence. The Artists’ Need workgroup survey issued on behalf of the Task Force had a noble, well-intentioned beginning, but was hastily constructed, short-lived, and received nominal responses. In addition, the respondents were predominantly white.³⁴

Those artists who did respond to the Artists’ Needs survey mostly reflected Baltimore City’s ‘White L:’ 62% of respondents were white with only 38% People of Color responding; 32% of respondents were 40 years old or older, 68% of respondents were visual artists, 65% of respondents lived in North or Central Baltimore, and 50% of respondents worked in arts districts, but over a third of respondents didn’t know the answer to this question. (Pugh, Mayor 2017)

In order to share thoughts and to have safe spaces, the arts and cultural community and reflected data and Task Forces need to look like Baltimore, a majority minority city whose current population is 62% Black or African American alone. (“U.S. Census Bureau QuickFacts: Baltimore City (County), Maryland” n.d.) All arts and cultural initiatives and efforts must prioritize racial, social, civic, and economic equity.

The most visible win for increasing trust and equity in order for safety and creativity to coexist is to issue an apology and provide reparations to the Black, Brown, and queer artists

³⁴ See Appendix C: Report of The Mayor’s Task Force for Safe Arts Spaces for the complete Artists’ Needs Survey responses.

harmled in the aftermath of the Ghost Ship fire. This thesis supports the voice of former Bell Foundry tenant Qué Pequeño who recommended:

...An apology must be issued to all [people] such as myself in the city, by the city, from the city, Black artists. And I feel like ... this should be the spark for them to start funding artists like myself, like, yearly. They should like stop looking at places like MICA and start looking at places like DIY spaces, places like the streets, places like [the Bell Foundry] where we see some of the greatest artists - some of the best artists - in Baltimore City. (Fox 2016)

Additional, immediate visible though technical quick wins implement some of the discussions from the early Task Force meetings that were only latently embedded in the final Report.

Like Pequeño suggests, funding needs to be made immediately available to artist run spaces for “developing short-term strategies for preserving existing spaces and longer-term strategies for funding new ones.” (E. McLeod 2017b) Urgent amendments must be made to the city’s code and regulatory system and policy, and the code must continuously be audited to understand how it applies barriers to arts spaces. A new protocol must be developed for regulation – or even certification – of existing and future arts spaces. A public education campaign is urgently needed to raise awareness about the implications of existing policy and regulations. One of the largest hurdles to safety and creativity’s coexistence is the cost of compliance. Bonitz notes in an early Task Force meeting:

What do you do in a case where someone has been using a building for 10 or 15 years, there never was a U&O [use and occupancy permit] for that change in use, and you’re going to be expecting them to file a U&O and have to come up...for everything in the building – ADA, energy code, all these things? There’s no way they’re going to be able to pay for that. (E. McLeod 2017b)

It is appalling that her concerns are still a barrier to safety for artist run spaces.

“It’s a mistake to assume that the lack of government oversight of the Ghost Ship is unique to the bohemian warehouse-dwelling scene. The fire escape outside [an] apartment window is a reminder that, in the wake of the horrific tenement fires of the late 18th century, the cities of the past figured out how to become safer places. We can do this too. It starts with making sure that residents of dangerous buildings can report safety concerns without worrying that they will lose their homes. (H. Smith 2016)”

Logistical and technical quick wins are possible if there can be collective memory, imagination, and political will to implement them. Nationally and locally, this occurred after the tragic fire at The Station in Rhode Island. It occurred after the Triangle Shirtwaist Factory fire. This thesis

posits that artists and audiences need not die in vain if proactive, not reactive, planning efforts can implement strategies that prevent - rather than respond - to future traumas.

“While we still don't know the full toll of this disaster, we do know that an American community has been devastated, and many people – including young men and women with their whole futures ahead of them – have tragically lost their lives,” former President Obama stated on December 5, 2016, in response to the Ghost Ship fire. “Oakland is one of the most diverse and creative cities in our country, and as families and residents pull together in the wake of this awful tragedy, they will have the unwavering support of the American people.” (“Statement by the President on Oakland Fire” 2016) Artist run spaces and their chosen families in Baltimore City and in cities like Oakland continue to need this same support – from governmental to the unwavering support of the American people – as the true tolls of the disaster continue to unfold and communities continue to plan for and with arts and culture.

Safety is Holistic, not Punitive. Learn from Mistakes. Don't get Sued

Fire and building code officials need to reckon with the complexity of safety. Safety should be a reward, not a punishment, a human right, not a privilege. Safety exists on a spectrum, and implementation means addressing a whole ecosystem. As a former Bell Foundry tenant eloquently reminds us, ““There's so many layers to what safety looks like. Structural hazard is only one of them – and not even, for many, the most important one.” (Steinhauer and Kirkman 2016)

After the Ghost Ship tragedy killed or severely injured over thirty-six, the National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) and the National Fire and Life Safety Policy Institute (NFLSPI) recognized the dangers of thinking of fire and buildings hazards through separate or disparate bureaucratic methods. Unfortunately, it took the deaths of the artists and audiences at the Ghost Ship and several major lawsuits to coordinate and develop a holistic understanding of life safety,

fire prevention, and community-centric engagement and education. NFPA says of the learning process in their own scholarly journal,

Oakland agreed to pay nearly \$33 million to settle lawsuits filed on behalf of 32 victims as well as to one survivor, Sam Maxwell, who according to a statement released by the city, suffered “severe, lifelong injuries.” Despite the settlements, the city maintains it bears no responsibility for the blaze. “The city continues to assert...that it is not liable for these tragic losses,” the statement said. “The city decided to settle this case because of the cost-benefit analysis.” Lawyers representing victims and their families have said the city didn’t do enough to investigate unsafe conditions at the warehouse-turned-living-space. Records show, for example, that in 2015, an Oakland police officer responded to a noise complaint at Ghost Ship and noted its tinderbox conditions, but nothing changed. “If they’d done the right thing, this tragedy never would have happened,” attorney Mary Alexander told the New York Times.

Reporting by NFPA Journal on the incident detailed the difficulty cities face in uncovering dangerous and illegal repurposing of buildings, like the one that took place in Oakland. “Folks in the enforcement community will tell you that this is one of the biggest concerns they have in front of them,” NFPA President and CEO Jim Pauley told the magazine. Shortly thereafter, the fire served as a primary influence in the creation in 2018 of the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem, a framework for achieving a system of fire, life, and electrical safety that emphasizes the many interrelated aspects of such a system. (Verzoni 2017)

In addition to taking responsibility and learning from past mistakes, no matter how tragic, planners can alleviate the tensions between safety and creativity by adopting the NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem practices in all municipalities. The NFPA explains the eight interlocking key components of the Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem:

These components are interdependent. When they work together, the Ecosystem protects everyone. If any component is missing or broken, the Ecosystem can collapse, often resulting in tragedy. Almost always we can trace the cause of injurious life safety incidents and tragedies back to the breakdown of one or more components. (NFPA n.d.)

These key components are pictured in the NFPA Fire & Life Safety diagram shown below (See below Figure 15):



Figure 15: NFPA Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem

The NFPA also provides a free assessment tool for individuals, developers, and city representatives to use to identify gaps in their community’s support for safety, and targeted resources guides and training to remediate the gaps once they are identified. In order to provide holistic support for the arts and cultural ecosystem in Baltimore City and beyond, the Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem must be enacted in local policy and practice.

Immediate Recommendations to Increase Fire & Life Safety

In addition to adopting and enacting the Fire & Life Safety Ecosystem, immediate policy and practice strategies can be put into place to increase the likelihood of safety and creativity coexisting in Baltimore. While I am not a trained firefighter, fire prevention officer, fire marshal, architect, or building inspector, the following specific recommendations are my own interpretation of priorities inspired by the findings, from NFPA members personal and professional writings in response to the Ghost Ship fire, and conversations with Baltimore City building and fire regulatory officials.

Before even enacting inspections, there are systemic and specific precursors that must be addressed.

1. Repair or rebuild flawed existing fire and code enforcement inspection system.
2. Develop more robust and sympathetic staffing and capacity to support the quantity and quality of fire and building code inspections needed.
3. Create a workforce training program to train future and current inspectors in the technical, psychological, and emotional components of fire safety.
4. As many nuisance, fire, and building code complaints are simply marked as complete even though they are not investigated, it is imperative to properly respond to and document nuisance complaints, code violations, and fire safety complaints or hazards when they are first reported.
 - a. In order to not miss a severe life or fire safety hazard in a closed complaint, regularly audit closed complaints and hazards for quality control.
5. There is a disconnect between fire marshals – firefighters turned bureaucrats -and the culture and valuation of on the ground run in to save the day firefighters. To resolve this tension, train firefighters to value fire inspections as a lifesaving preventative measure.

6. Increase firefighter's awareness on and off the clock. (See Spin Magazine article about the Bell Foundry and the Task Force for more information and context.)
7. Make the 2017 eviction moratorium for arts spaces permanent policy and amend it to include additional details akin to Oakland's 2017-1 Executive Order.

To support life and fire safety after systemic precursors are addressed, building and fire inspections much be improved. To increase life and fire safety:

1. Adequately staff the City's fire and building inspection teams.
2. Many buildings that do need to be routinely inspected often go uninspected. When the inspections occur, it is an often-unwelcome surprise. Some buildings are never inspected at all. An inventory of all buildings must be created. Audit the comprehensive list for properties that have not been inspected in over 10 years, and schedule inspections starting with longest time since inspection to shortest time inspected. Give advance notice of the pending inspection to the occupants of the buildings (if there are occupants, as some of the structures might be vacant or uninhabitable) Establish a regular 5-year to annual inspection cycle thereafter for all buildings.
3. Code and fire enforcement professionals who are not map-makers or spatial analysts by trade or training should work with planners to identify and map hazard properties or properties in urgent need of inspection.
4. Coordinate with the code enforcement division of the Baltimore City Department of Housing and Community Development (DHCD) and the Baltimore City police department to share a cross-database of hazard properties and complaints that could pose a threat to life safety.

Additional inspiration comes from a California fire prevention expert regarding San Francisco's Fire Prevention Bureau (FPB) - what if an efficient, service-oriented system did exist

within the Baltimore City Fire Department (BCFD) in which firefighters, code inspectors, or even police or other city bureaucrats could refer fire code issues observed to a Fire Prevention Bureau? Does the Baltimore City Fire Department even have a Fire Prevention Bureau?

Baltimore City does indeed have a Fire Prevention Bureau embedded in the Fire Department and explains that their existing approach to fire safety is two-fold, including “enforcement and regulation of the Baltimore City fire code and a community based public education program.” (BCFD 2015) The first part – public education – is focused on encouraging the installation of smoke and carbon monoxide detectors in single family residences and not celebrating with fireworks, which are illegal in the state of Maryland. The second part – fire code compliance – targets new construction and legally operating public assembly spaces. BCFD’s summary of how the building code and fire codes intersect lacks detail and interest in addressing circumstances applicable to existing artist run spaces, or non-complaint existing buildings in general, especially buildings that do not have legally permitted uses and are operating underground.³⁵ Current inspections and investigations are notably a maintenance-only policy.

The FPB system in California was intended to provide a vehicle by which Bureau inspectors could officially be made aware of unsafe conditions, perform follow up inspections, address violations, and enforce compliance through citations and fines, if necessary. This is often a

³⁵ According to the BCFD’s Fire Prevention Bureau’s website:

... The Fire Marshal’s Office works closely with city building code inspectors to ensure all new commercial and residential construction within the city meets the established fire code. This includes testing and approval of fire protection systems, plans review of new sprinkler systems, fire alarms, etc., and reviewing architectural plans for "Life Safety Code" compliance. In addition, it oversees all efforts to bring all older commercial buildings up to present day code.

The difference between how the city building code and city fire codes function can be thought of like this; While the building code requires all new construction to meet current regulations requiring on site fire suppression systems, the fire code acts more like a maintenance regulation. This is done through annual inspection and permitting. Some examples are the inspection of establishments for "Public Assembly" such as bars, night clubs, sports arenas, restaurants and churches, inspections for verification of code compliance items in homes, businesses, schools, hospitals, nursing homes, and issuing Fire Prevention Permits for required occupancies, called the "Use and Occupancy" Permit. Every building in the city where the public works, plays or spends time is inspected annually. Private residences are not. (BCFD 2015)

long and laborious process according to the California fire expert's blog, and necessitates amendment and capacity building because it needn't be if given proper staffing and support. (Legoudes, Jr 2018) Developing, expanding, and building the capacity and services provided by the BCFD Fire Prevention Bureau to include holistic and comprehensive technical assistance to artist run spaces - a system like the California model that provides a vehicle for bringing unsafe conditions into compliance in collaboration with building code regulatory agencies - would have immediate and much needed impact in increasing safety and creativity's ability to coexist without driving artists further underground in Baltimore City.

Do the Research, Clarify Definitions, and Don't Plan like a Suburb

Planners need to read artists' scholarship, and artists need to read planning scholarship. Understanding key concepts and clarifying those concepts both internally (from the personal, to the workgroup, to the Task Force level) and externally (public understanding) is key to successfully planning for and with artists. All legitimate research and practice are embedded in a firm understanding of the literature – what has come before. In order to process and to posit new solutions or remedies, the existing conditions must be understood and analyzed. Neither the dominant nor the non-dominant authorities could understand where the other was coming from, and the debates were about life-or-death issues without a middle ground to meet on, especially with regards to the nebulous and shifting understandings about what safety and creativity meant in the first place. When describing this tension in creative placemaking, a tension much like the debates of the Task Force, Andrew Zitcer cites Nietzsche “This has caused me the greatest trouble and still does always cause me the greatest trouble: to realize that what things are called is unspeakably more important than what they are. (Zitcer 2020)”

The specific role of the Task Force was never fully defined and was initially not communicated accurately by the mayor, resulting in some very public controversies (the entire

arts scene ‘in hibernation,’ for example) around the Task Force’s and the arts and cultural community’s time and how it was being spent. To mitigate these tensions, a bespoke dictionary or lexicon, to promote the understanding of definitions, delineations, challenges, and opportunities is required.³⁶

Firmly embedding responses to core issues in a shared understanding also encourages research into what others are doing – using a collective wisdom. This means not only tapping Baltimore City’s vast wealth of community knowledge, but also developing and maintaining relationships with other cities, the federal government, and the history, theory, and practice of other disciplines. A pool of resources was developed in response to the Ghost Ship fire and nationwide shutdown, but these resources are not compiled anywhere, not widely published, and certainly not made available to Baltimore City constituents during the tenure of the Task Force.

While every municipality is unique in its complexities of building and zoning codes, political processes, and financing availability, there are significant trends and commonalities in ways that safety and creativity can coexist. These trends and commonalities must be explored and enacted everywhere. Some example resource guides on how to plan for and to make safe and creative artist run spaces include *Harm Reduction for DIY Venues*, a collaborative, open-source document spearheaded by artists and designers Park Frost and S. Surface in the wake of the Ghost Ship fire, Artspace’s *Safety & Artist Spaces Best Practices*, and Seattle’s *CAP Report*.³⁷ Read them, embrace them, and follow them, from distribution of fire extinguishers, to radicalizing funding pipelines, to rethinking affordable housing, to amending the zoning code; ideas exist that are applicable and actionable.

³⁶ See Seattle’s definition of cultural space as an example in Appendix A: Comparison Cities References & Resources.)

³⁷ See Appendix E: Recommendations References & Resources for these compiled resource examples.

Many of Baltimore City's regulatory agencies and industry experts reside in the surrounding counties, not actually living in Baltimore City. While this is already somewhat problematic because the people most responsible for the fates and futures of those most imperiled are not actually directly affected, it also conveys a 'plan like a suburb' mentality. Planning and practicing like a suburb does not acknowledge the systemic and symbiotic nature of the work to the issues. In order to fully alleviate the tensions between safety and creativity, we must accept that artists' and arts space needs are the same as all of our needs. The tensions between safety and creativity are reflected in the nationwide affordable housing crisis, in rising inequity and racial and class divides, in uneven distribution of resources from the federal to the local, in our political, social, civic, and economic landscapes. Artist run spaces will continue to be in jeopardy and will never be truly safe as long as poverty, racism, and inequality are allowed to exist.

Lessons Learned and Opportunities

Today, the warehouse looks much like it did five years ago: the walls boarded up, but exposed to the elements with its roof missing, soot fading on the painted “Ghost Ship” sign above a padlocked door party goers had entered the night of the fire.

...It has become a tourist attraction, with the Ghost Ship being a stop after visitors check out the mural of Oscar Grant III... (DeBolt 2021)



Figure 16: The Ghost Ship Warehouse 5 years after the fire where 36 people died. (Amir Aziz, Photographer) (Debolt and Aziz 2021)

This research examines, summarizes, and daylights challenges and potentials for safety and creativity to coexist, in order to preserve, protect, and sustain spaces by and for the arts. I argue that self-organized art spaces must be acknowledged, accommodated, and planned for, and the coexistence of their safety and creativity must not only be allowed but also enabled. The thesis investigates the intersections and disconnects between how artists envision safety and creativity and how planners envision safety and creativity. The resulting recommendations and analysis posited actionable strategies for the ongoing theoretical, policy, social, and practical domains of

art spaces and artists and the built environment of a shrinking city, showing how safety and creativity can coexist in Baltimore City artist run spaces.

A review of the literature reveals gaps in the analysis of planning with and for arts and culture, especially artist run spaces in majority-minority cities like Baltimore. This thesis folds Baltimore City's artists and artist run spaces, in particular the Bell Foundry, snugly into the scholarly discourse's established and well-worn gentrification process as an exemplar. Planners like Richard Florida, whose *Rise of the Creative Class* in 2002 has defined the community and economic development discourse for the last two decades, think of the creative class in purely utilitarian terms, often celebrating gentrification that, in fact, displaces artists. Other scholars - with whom this research more closely aligns - debate and critique Florida's use of creativity, especially because "creativity is hard to define." (Markusen 2006)

How can we share the same space when we don't even share the same words? Academic planners that think they are the experts, that they get to define - and did define - what words and ideas like creativity mean. Planners and artists have separate scholarships, however, separate scholarly and professional legitimization, and while planning literature is digested and processed by artists, planning scholars largely ignore or have presented little evidence of their investment in the literature of the radical arts counterculture or its evolution. As the structure of space mirrors the structure of thought, in order to have safe and creative space we must have shared thought; in order to share thought, we must share space with people who are not like us.

When presenting the work of the Arts Safe Space Task Force's implementation via BARCO's Arts Space Technical Assistance Program to national audiences outside of Baltimore, Bonitz and I would often include our lessons learned. These take aways are reminders to planners in Baltimore and beyond that there is much to be gathered from the findings that examine Baltimore City's response to the Ghost Ship, the Bell Foundry, and the Task Force. Bonitz, a planner herself, embraces our following lessons:

What I have learned from working in Central Baltimore

1. *Collaboration is key.*
2. *Support organizations are essential.*
3. *Not every neighborhood has to be saved by the super project (and may be more interesting if it isn't!)*
4. *Be vigilant about equity and inclusion.*
5. *Artists and local entrepreneur's create stickiness!*
6. *Public and foundation money make the difference.*
7. *Acquisition tools are important.*
8. *More is more.*

What I have learned from working with Artists:

1. *Space is a means to allow:*
 - a. *Great people to do cool things – making, performing, recording, growing, exhibiting, building, living, gathering, etc.*
 - b. *Building a community of mutual support.*
2. *Messy, flexible space that serves multiple functions is essential – that's how creativity and innovation works!*
3. *DIY space can be beautiful even if it looks like an empty building on the outside.*
4. *There is value in #1-#3 that is not always counted by traditional economic developers.*

Planning practitioners and scholars can heed these lessons learned as the field serves and engages its constituencies – artists and anti-establishment, underground, or marginalized populations, specifically. As Rizzo states of her investigations of Baltimore, “Sometimes the city represents only itself. More often, though, the city is a stand-in for all cities of a certain type.” (Rizzo 2020) In practice over, and in scholarly debate of, wicked problems like affordable housing, systemic racism, gender inequality, and poverty, artists and artists run spaces are vulnerable indicators and examples of the wealth lost to urban ecosystems when the cultural sector is not supported and sustained.

I title this section “Lessons Learned and Opportunities” because conclusions are perhaps impossible. As this thesis wraps itself up, the questions persist. The tensions persist. The possibilities and problems persist.

If we can't have direct action now for artist run spaces via forward-looking planning processes, perhaps the research questions shift to that of preservation, to ways to manage change over time. Is conservation and interpretation of countercultural heritage sites like that of the Ghost Ship or the Bell Foundry possible? How do we remember or revere the artist run spaces

that we have lost but still linger and contribute to the cultural identity of Baltimore? Of the nation? What does preservation of these spaces look like?

Can we prevent a future Ghost Ship tragedy by not only inventing new planning tools, but also new preservation tools, to honor, develop, and sustain artist run spaces in ways that we haven't thought of yet? And should it be planners doing the inventing, or should it be the artists?



Figure 17: Marian and Theo of BARCO walking in Graffiti Alley behind Motorhouse during the life of the Arts Space Technical Assistance Program. This image is the cover image for Station North's website in 2023. (Station North Arts & Entertainment n.d.)

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Appendix A: Comparison Cities References & Resources

- i. [Seattle Arts Commission Open Letter](#)
- ii. [Seattle Cultural Space Definition](#)
- iii. [Seattle Cultural Space Inventory](#)
- iv. [City of Oakland Ghost Ship Fire Anniversary Update & Progress Report November 9, 2017](#)
- v. [City of Oakland Ghost Ship Fire Anniversary Update Progress Report April 6, 2021](#)
- vi. [Oakland Executive Order 2017-1: Improving Safety of Non-Permitted Spaces While Avoiding Displacement](#)

Appendix B: Interviewees

In order to investigate the concepts outlined in the thesis more deeply, the research design included interviews. I conducted 98 total informal interviews with Baltimore City artists, arts service organization professionals, City and State officials, community and economic developers, non-profit leaders, arts service and advocacy organizations, and other creative and cultural stakeholders, including members of the Arts Safe Space Task Force. Additional stakeholders are defined as individuals actively involved in local institutions including philanthropic organizations and community development corporations or individuals directly involved with neighborhood or community revitalization or redevelopment. Given my relationship with the interviewees and the kind of information sought, the interviews were conducted as informal, guided conversations, “using the interviewees’ responses to direct interview flow (Carr and Servon 2008).

It should be noted how hesitant nearly all of the interviewees were to speak on the record, despite all of them being very willing – if not elated - to confide in me, personally. Many of the interviewees from the non-profit sector and local government still feared for their jobs or for variations in their personal safety if their honest opinions were shared, or if they spoke “outside” or “counter to the party line.” Most artists very much still feared for their physical and spatial security, especially as these interviews were conducted as the country was just beginning to emerge from the COVID-19 pandemic shutdowns. Many of the former members of the Task Force simply wanted to put the “whole ordeal” behind them, and as noted in the findings, continue to carry a great amount of resentment towards the political climate that diffused the

<i>Interviewees by Professional Association – as of 09 September 2023</i>	
Spoke with 14 Local Government City/State	14
Spoke with 8 Retired City or Private Sector Community & Economic Development	8
Spoke with 5 ASO's	5
Spoke with 3 philanthropies	3
Spoke with 13/37 artists would go on record, rest skeptical of even notes taken/formal interview	37
Spoke with 3 real estate lawyers	3
Spoke with 6 architects/design professionals	6
Spoke with 5 museum professionals	5
Spoke with 17/29 members of the task force	17
TOTAL ON RECORD	17
TOTAL SPOKEN WITH	98
TOTALW/ ON RECORD ARTISTS	74

impact of the efforts. I am truly grateful to those who spoke with me for this research, and I deeply respect those who politely declined. Please see the table on the left for more details on interviewees by profession.

Table 5: Interviewees by Professional Association

Appendix C: Report of The Mayor's Task Force for Safe Arts Spaces

- i. [Report of The Mayor's Task Force for Safe Arts Spaces](#)
- ii.

Appendix D: Transcript of “The List” Debate from the Arts Safe Space Task Force Public Forum

“The List” Debate: Transcript from the Arts Safe Space Task Force Public Forum War Memorial Building, Baltimore City, February 16th 2017

FIRE MARSHALL: friendly fire department. Believe it or not, we are very friendly. I want to assure everyone here that there is no list. Artist spaces. We don't track buildings by that type of classification. So someone to come here now and even offer me \$1,000,000, I could not give you a list of artists spaces because we don't categorize buildings in that way. We categorize them by occupancy. So there is no. Direct effort on the part of the fire department, I can assure you to go and look for artist spaces. So I just wanted to assure everyone of that because we've gotten several questions about artist spaces, artist spaces and they kind of don't exist in our classification is based on the occupancy are you residential or your business. Simply, that's how we track them. So I just wanted to kind of make sure that that was cleared everything. There's no special effort.

DAN DEACON DEBATES THE FIRE MARSHALL : Do you mind if I ask a question on that point? I've just heard from several people that are in these spaces that weeks and they haven't heard from anyone there and that they're known as an art space by the fire department and I'm just wondering how that information could be disseminated or what's causing these inspections?

FIRE MARSHALL: Inspections for us are triggered either by you required to have an annual inspection based on the type of business that you are, a type of structure that you are. We will come out if we receive an A complaint, but normally we don't go up and down trying to conduct inspections on places for no reason. Actually, there are too many buildings for us to do that too. So there's no effort. Of course, I don't think that we, we don't, we don't do that. We have. Far more to do when we receive a complaint, it may be. There's a lot of cars parked on the outside. There's a lot of garbage on the outside. We see people coming and going. We see extra wires coming out of a house showing us that there's no electricity. Those are the kinds of things that we respond to. We don't respond to this is an artist building in their people here, because even if there were artists working there, we don't know that that's not a structure that you're not permitted to be to live, work and play in. So that's not how we respond. So I don't know where you've gotten that. Just to be clear, I don't think the fire department has like a dartboard with word artists on it or anything like that. OK, I guess what I'm trying to say is that these spaces do exist and. However, they're getting reported by either by A311 or someone who's concerned or just wants to see the space shut down for political reasons. I do think we need to establish immediately, not within the span of several months, what to do if a space is in violation and to not have further Bell Foundries.

DAN DEACON: we I moved to the city because of the vibrant arts community, and I've made my living doing so and started a small business because of it. And I think of these spaces continue happening. What if what's happening with these spaces continues? I feel like our work is pointless.

FIRE MARSHALL: We have procedures in place in the event that we come upon a place where people are living or working and they should not be for various fire code related reasons that we're able to assist them in relocating wherever possible. So it's not just artists that we may find in buildings where it's not safe, we have fires. Probably every other week where it's perceived to probably be a vacant building when we get there and there may be homeless people that are living in that building. So it's not just one population and we treat all of those people the same way. If you're in need of a relocation effort, we will call out the office of Emergency Management if you indicate that you're in need of relocation and assist you. So it's. It's not targeted in any way.

Dan Deacon: Again, I don't think you're targeting them. I'm just talking about spaces that are getting inspected and being told to move, and the creation of this task force was to preserve artist run spaces. I think we should follow the what Oakland did and have the mayor create something of protocol for what to do with existing spaces that exist. Now. Without that, we're going to be in the same situation where people are gonna get displaced and if you get kicked out of your artist run space, you're it's not going to reform. It's just not going to happen. Let me just comment for a minute.

LARIA: probably a sworn and legal duty to deal with life safety issues, and where they exist, they have to be addressed at the same time. Dan, I absolutely agree with you. I think everybody wants to make sure that we don't. I mean we don't want to do this and find out and in the worst case scenario that that in the meantime all these spaces have atrophied or worse been put out of business. So we have to find a way to do that. I'm familiar with the Oakland Executive order we've. Actually started a conversation with the Commissioner and with the mayor's office about what could be done here analogous to that, because I think I share your view, which is we need to do something right now. This is about short term, medium term, long term, and the short term issue is preserving the spaces that are here. To the extent possible, giving as much whether you want to call it flexibility or amnesty or grace period, I think you say

grace period. I think I've in the past I've said amnesty something that allows us to for these spaces to continue and to and to exist and thrive while we figure this out with some sort of backstop about life safety issues that at some point everybody has to acknowledge. But short of that, we should be as flexible as we possibly can and we're going to work with the housing department, with the fire department, with the mayor's office and with others along that path.

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STOKES: (DISTRICT 12) So I appreciate your comments and I think it's important for everybody to hear, to hear that today. I just wanna. Of detail with the fire department is said. I've had most of probably all the artists buildings in the 12th district and I can assure you we haven't got no calls about go check that building that's our art space and we haven't got anything so I want to assure that the artist that that's not happening in my office and I don't get calls at all

DAN I know several spaces and about to be inspected in the 12th District. I'll give you a call tomorrow again, we should.

LARIA: We are, I mean, look, we're, we want to, we, we are trying to make some policy recommendations, short, medium, long term and in the short term we're also trying to get ahead of it on top of these problems. So to the extent that we have, you have where there are specific examples, you should be coming to us. We're here to try and solve these problems, to create these. To deal with the short term issue as well as the medium and long term issues. So we need as much information as possible and I think there are enough advocates who will try and strike a balance between the very important priority of allowing these bases to continue balanced against again I think in some but certainly not all instances for sure. Uh, significant life safety issues that people do have to take, take seriously so we can talk about it further, reach out. But I really appreciate your raising it. It's a it's it is a critically important issue, one that we literally been talking about today. The Oakland Executive Order provides potentially some kind of a framework that we could. we could try and adapt

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*****COUNCILMAN DORSEY: Councilman Stokes here, who is a member of this? Task force, but it's something that you know as a. I started hosting shows in my parents basement when I was 14 years old. I've been. In some capacity part of our arts community in Baltimore. Many of the years prior to me becoming a member of the City Council. And just a couple of things that have occurred to me. Uh, one, I was at the Bell foundry. What during the period that tenants or residents were being allowed to remove their things and one of the things that I heard from people there in that moment were kind of the. The seeming lack of humanitarian concern in there, and I'm sure that that's a large part of why this task force exists, but two things in particular that seemed worth pointing out were that the folks there didn't have any idea what the. Office of Emergency Management is or who Reggie Scriber is and what the Ombudsman does and that it's there for the purpose that I heard stated here, partly to assist in relocation efforts and as the director. Braverman pointed out. They are supposed to be called, you know, as soon as something like this is going to occur. And they were not called until the next day. While this was happening. They didn't know that people had been displaced that night. And in the meantime, folks kind of panicked about, you know, giving their information, not sure if they should claim that they own that they lived in this space or not. So there's a lot of just kind of a lack of information. And so I would just take this as a queue for the city to try to do a little better effort. On in just educating the public on what city services are offered, what these offices do. Another thing that has occurred to me is that one of the things that was problematic in the Bell foundry was. The quality and the existence of unpermitted work. Umm, I have throughout the last couple of years and also having worked as a contractor and having to pull permits for the city, founded in a rather arduous process of pulling construction permits. I think that as we consider the issue of artist housing in the larger context. Of like just housing. It's important to realize that artists are facing many of the same problems that we as the city as a whole are facing, and that improvement to general kind of services of the city are de facto and improvements to artist conditions. One of the things could be better outreach. Around the permitting process and improving the permitting process for pulling construction permits. Then another thing that I've encountered personally is occasions where you want to do some work, you know how to do it, but you are not personally licensed to be able to do that work and it would cost you a whole lot more. To hire somebody to do that work that you know that you can perform. This is part of the science of the challenge of DIY spaces. Is knowing that you can get it done. But there are these capital barriers to success. I'll just throw this out here. Maybe it's crazy. The city has people on its payroll who are licensed in fields of electrical work and such. Maybe it's possible for there to be a city and DIY partnership in issuing permits and allowing people to perform work. Under some sort of guidance, you know, or supervision by the city under certain circumstances. And you know, as we're talking about artists, one of the things that. That I you know, there are models that exist for who qualifies. I know that in European places it's possible to qualify for very high quality, very cheap health insurance if you are able to prove that you earn a certain threshold through arts cultural production. But below a certain other threshold, if you fit into that media and you're kind of showing, yes, I'm actually a legitimate artist. I've been, you know, working at this, but I'm not making exorbitant amounts of money. We can use certain criteria like that, I think, to qualify for different programs that are geared directly at artists rather than. Maybe within Arts districts I have a sense that there are a lot of people who feel like arts districts invariably gentrify and

place and displace workers, cost displace workers, artists and those who make them thriving communities and, and I think this might be a good time to discuss. Alternatives to the model of geographic location of benefits and placing them more in the field of work of making art. The last thing I'll talk about is. That we do have not just a lot of city owned buildings, but we do have a lot of vacant privately owned buildings and I think there might be the potential for incentivizing of the stabilization of privately owned buildings through something maybe a program like a tax benefit to private owners. Say folks who own hundreds of houses and live in Texas and just trade them for open market value to stabilize these buildings, not necessarily for the purpose of residents, but for use as artists studio spaces to make doing the work of being an artist more affordable. Where they might not otherwise be inhabitable for residents. I don't know if Michael could probably talk about that as well as you know. I want to reiterate what I've heard here and what I talk about. I promote lamando to virtually every person that comes into my office in City Hall. And I like to point out that again, this is not a typical kind of development model. The fundraising and the structure for acquisition is a little abnormal where and yet they're persisting and moving closer to actually opening, whereas the same time that they responded to an RFP, the adjacent buildings. You know there were models or traditional development money in the bank versus and like investors ready to throw in and neither of those projects has gone anywhere. So these artists driven projects are actually from communities and revitalizing communities. I do just want to second that they're very clearly are artists, face being targeted and isolated. I have received numerous, numerous calls. Like I don't receive calls from people just ordinarily in my office or my personal phone. Like I'm just Joe Schmo and I live in ex neighborhood. And I got word that my house is going to be inspected, people are going to come in and check the wiring of my place. Like that doesn't happen. That is happening as an accelerated rate in the artist space. So I think it really I want to second Dan's point that. the moratorium is paramount right now because this clearly is happening by whatever means it is so that's what I'm going to walk away from the mic having said those things...

LARIA: bring a lot of personal credibility and passion to this because of your own background, so we appreciate it. You touched on a few things that hadn't really been discussed so far today, but I think are worth sort of reiterating and repeating. The task force and the work groups have talked about the communication issues that you started talking about at the beginning, about making clear what the rules might be, what the opportunities might be, what the resources might be. And we've talked about ways in which we could make those, make those available in a in a clear and concise way. We talked about the resource question regarding, you know the you. Your approach is this apprenticeship idea which is you know, for actual work, which is very interesting. We've talked similarly about. The idea of having resources, technical resources, architectural design resources available so that people who have spaces that they want to improve and want to do so in a in a in a reasonable, reasonable, cost lawful way can do that. They may not have access. Could this task force recommend that the city make that? Resource available as a public benefit. So you know those kinds of things which we have not talked about yet today are critically, critically important. So we want to continue that discussion. But I want you to know, I want people who are here to know that those are the kinds of things that we're talking about and some of them are. Are really shouldn't be that hard to achieve. They just they just don't exist and they need to. So I like apprenticeships. Yes Sir, sounds great. OK.

BRAVERMAN/PISACANE re. Load of Fun: Monday permits are online now to get massive improvement in the customer experience? I think so. The gentleman over here regarding you don't need to come up, I just want to tell you I. I bulleted Mr. Braverman, who said I'd be happy to talk with you afterwards since it's sort of a little bit off the topic, but be happy to give you whatever information you need or want regarding the process behind. I'm. From a paranoia perspective. A complaint space was shut down and then it moved and it's relatively quickly, especially with the great views, but who knows the story of the narrative. So I was asking simply for anything. Anyone has any insight that I can tell you? Thanks for the concern. There's. You know every now and then some of the spaces. You know, end up being inspected because somebody who's living there has a beef with somebody else or with the landlord. And pretty sure that's what brought us to load of fun and when we did an inspection at load of fund, it was. Unsafe and the uses which were not permitted and couldn't be because it was grossly unsafe in terms of a bunch of different things. but minimally the electrical you may be familiar with seeing that, so it needed it couldn't be occupied any longer. The owner however, was cooperative. and worked it with his tenants to end the use and to have people exit in a sort of orderly way and then i think ultimately the building was sold and it's returned to the artist community in a matter of speaking but that's the history exit to my knowledge

*****DAN DEACON: I think guys main point, and it echoes a point that someone very well articulated earlier there's a great deal of institutional mistrust and just when I was trying to promote this particular event on Facebook, many people who shared it said I don't trust this task force and I think because people just don't honestly don't know what it is, and I think it's an uphill battle for us. And as someone on the task force within the arts community, I. I think it would be move us to. Better articulate exactly what we are. I know we're all trying our best, and I see you shaking your head because I know you bear front of it. But I think there's a reason why a great number of spaces aren't here tonight is because they're afraid to come here, and they're afraid to come out and say I am with this space because of. just narking

on themselves and i feel like it's going to take it's going to be a big effort on our part and especially the organizations that want to help to let people know that they are here to help and in in a safe process

Franks says people who have fears can get on the survey, the idea is not to evict people, it's to collect experiences and ideas to create spaces that are safe and useful

****DAN CONTINUES...I think people put the survey together, did a great job of doing such and maybe it's an impossible task to try to convince the population that's never going to trust a government board to trust the government. Being someone doesn't trust the government. I have a hard time trusting myself on this task force but. Perhaps it's for the people who did come to this meeting that are not on the task force to let other people know to come to these meetings and to voice their concerns and to find out if we're narcs or not by coming to these meetings. And I think it's, I think, if mistrust is vitally important in a process like this, especially since there's so much confusion about. What can get a space shut down? Or what can stop a space from being a home, or a performance space, or a gallery or studio?

Appendix E: Recommendations References & Resources

- i. [Harm Reduction for DIY Venues](#)
- ii. [Artspace Safety and Artist's Space Best Practices](#)
- iii. [The CAP Report, 30 Ideas for the Creation, Activation & Preservation of Cultural Space:
A Program for Supporting Cultural Space Development](#)

