

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

LATOYA CANTRELL
MAYOR

COLLIN M. ARNOLD
DIRECTOR

IMPACT STATEMENT ON NOHSEP ENGAGEMENT WITH PERFORMING CITY RESILIENCE

The City of New Orleans Hazard Mitigation (HM) Office began our engagement with Dr. Stuart Andrews and Dr. Patrick Duggan in spring 2018 as a result of the city's participation in their research on the *Performing City Resilience (PCR)* project through the 100 Resilience Cities initiative. During a structured discussion about the city's emergency management practices, including preparedness, operations, recovery and mitigation, we examined the importance and nature of our relationship to the art and culture community. The principle lessons for our department include:

- Art/culture community and practices represent a central part of the identity of the city and, as such, should be appropriately represented in critical planning and policy development efforts.
- In addition to inclusion in decision-making processes, the city's preparedness and resilience work can benefit from greater representation in the arts as a means of diversifying and expanding the reach of the public message.
- The work conducted in emergency management as a field can also be understood through and art and culture lens as a performance.

The PCR research prompted the HM Office to examine our current and future undertakings for ways to enhance our engagement with the art and culture community in New Orleans in both processes and projects. We were immediately presented with some key collaborative opportunities which have greatly benefitted our work outcomes for both planning and public engagement.

During the 2018 review of proposals submitted to the city as part of a Request for Information (RFI) process for a Comprehensive Recovery Plan (CRP), we invited a representative from the Arts Council of New Orleans to sit on the review panel. In addition to feedback on the proposals, they provided specific recommendations for means of inclusion of the art and culture community in the planning process. As a result of this approach, we developed and included a requirement in the RFP which called for respondents to demonstrate strategies for meaningfully integrating artists and culture workers into both the development of the CRP and its implementation. This RFP was released in the summer 2019, with the work scheduled to begin later this year.

In August 2018, the New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Emergency Preparedness (NOHSEP) became the sponsoring agency on a grant proposal submitted to the National Endowment for the Arts by Antenna. This organization formed in 2005 and promotes art and literature in the New Orleans community through events, publications and arts education. Their proposal, *20/20: Reflections on Water*, includes a series of artistic projects and community workshops that utilize New Orleans's waterways, waterfronts, and pump stations as sites and subjects for artistic exploration as a means to examine the city's relationship with water. The project was awarded a grant in 2019, with activities scheduled to start in early 2020. The Hazard Mitigation Office will be working with Antenna throughout the project as a means of fostering

CITY OF NEW ORLEANS

LATOYA CANTRELL
MAYOR

COLLIN M. ARNOLD
DIRECTOR

city-wide awareness and stewardship of our water systems and involve residents in shaping policy, practices and projects during the city's hazard mitigation plan update cycle.

Both of these activities have started our office on a long-term path of embedding arts and cultural practices in our strategic planning and have opened channels with valuable groups not typically included in our planning and project activities. In June 2019, Dr. Andrews and Dr. Duggan returned to New Orleans to lead a series of engagements with both city employees and members of the arts community to further inform our hazard mitigation strategies. We plan to build upon this momentum in the coming year as we move through our mitigation planning process, where we will be specifically integrating art and culture groups in both the project generation process as well as increasing public awareness of resilience practice. This process has already started with the development of local advisory committees, but we hope this will lead into a formalized focus group and engagement process with the broader arts community. Finally, we are exploring efforts to partner with local artists during Prospect 5, a citywide contemporary art experience, in late 2020.

We are incredibly grateful to Dr. Andrews and Dr. Duggan for engaging with us in their research and support as it has and will continue to provide great benefits to our work as we seek to create a more resilient city. In recognition of their efforts, NOHSEP presented them with the agency's challenge coin during their June visit to the city. Such coins are used by law enforcement and public safety agencies to acknowledge special achievement and their history dates back to the Roman Empire. It is our hope that, through their work, they are able to collect many more.



Ryan C. Mast
Hazard Mitigation Administrator
City of New Orleans

BOARD OF
DIRECTORS

Amanda Mantle Winstead
Chairman

E. Tiffany Adler
Vice-Chairman & Ex-
Officio, Past Chairman

Beth Colon
Treasurer

Monique Gougisha
Doucette
Secretary

Alex Beard
Susan G. Brennan
Jade Brown Russell
Lucy Chun
Amy Collins
Paola Paoli Corrada
Dr. Takeisha Davis
Scott Fisher
Josh Mayer
Christopher Reade
Lee C. Reid
Pamela Reynolds Ryan
Jessie Schott Haynes
Jeffrey Schwartz
Matt Schwartz
Leopold Z. Sher
Liz Sloss
Tod Smith
Kristi Taglauer
David Teich
Kurt Weigle

Emeritus Members
William H. Hines
Thomas B. Lemann

Heidi Schmalbach
Executive Director

October 1, 2019



**RE: Impact Statement on Arts Council of New Orleans Engagement with Performing
City Resilience (PCR)**

In 2018 and 2019, the Arts Council of New Orleans worked with Dr. Stuart Andrews and Dr. Patrick Duggan on their *Performing City Resilience (PCR)* research project. The following is a summary of the lessons learned from that visit and an endorsement of the team's continued work in New Orleans.

In 2018, Dr. Andrews and Dr. Duggan facilitated an extended conversation with the Art's Council's executive team. During that meeting, we identified critical and pressing issues in the city and discussed the continued and extraordinary successes of artists, arts organizations and Arts Council initiatives in New Orleans. It was refreshing to reflect openly and frankly about challenges and opportunities with visitors who not only have an impressive understanding of the city, but who also intentionally created a safe environment in which to have the discussion. The work was useful to us in identifying areas of potential development and it was exciting to hear about developing links with City Hall. While we have established significant connections with key stakeholders in the city over the past forty years, it is easy to follow familiar tracks, and we valued the opportunity to think about new ways of working and new areas of practice with established and emerging partners in New Orleans.

Late in their first visit to the city, Andrews and Duggan also convened a public conversation on the arts and resilience at the Contemporary Arts Center of New Orleans. This attracted key contributors from city government and offered a facilitated opportunity to reflect on new ways of thinking about local contexts and challenges. While some of this landscape was familiar, the international perspective of the research project created a particular sense of opportunity, urgency and a new call to action. As we detail below, we have

valued the specific opportunities that have resulted from our engagement with PCR, especially rethinking arts practice, strategy in the context of resilience and the arts, and the Arts Council's work as a critical component of the city's resilience work.

As a result of that first phase of the PCR project and our desire to engage with new stakeholders, the New Orleans Office of Homeland Security and Hazard Mitigation (NOHSEP) invited us to sit on the review panel for the City's Comprehensive Recovery Plan. Through this work, we were able to recommend that arts and culture be included in planning processes for that Plan, building on the work that Andrews and Duggan had begun with NOHSEP in revealing the importance of the arts and culture to policy and practice in City Hall. In opening up opportunities for high-level dialogue between the Arts Council and NOHSEP, *Performing City Resilience* enabled us to engage with City

Hall in new and exciting ways, particularly in terms of recovery planning, thereby enhancing our strategic relationship with City Hall and, thereby, the city as a whole.

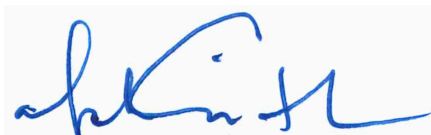
In 2019, Andrews and Duggan led an extended workshop with Arts Council staff and challenged us to rethink our role in - and relationship to - the city. Again, as informed 'outsiders' to the city, they were able to ask openly about our work and offer provocations and recommendations for enhancing our role in the city. We are reflecting on these recommendations as part of our future planning processes and we would be interested to continue conversations with Andrews and Duggan about the ways in which we might advance these in the future.

A key recommendation from the 2019 workshop was for the Arts Council to develop an 'arts/artists network' for New Orleans, which would serve as a voice for the arts in the city. In the current context, Andrews and Duggan recognized that, while crucial to the identity of the city and its tourist industry, the arts are often overlooked at city planning and governance levels. A city arts network, facilitated by the Arts Council, could offer a powerful voice in the life and strategic development of the city. We are excited about the possibilities for this network to become as a critical new part of our existing strategic development work.

One of the principal benefits of this project has been our ability to engage in conversation with new contacts in the city as well as the ability to engage with existing contacts in new ways. Through Andrews and Duggan's day-long site-based workshop (2019), we were able to productively reflect on our institutional concerns, to think differently about the places, practices and contribution of the arts to the city, and to reconsider what a more resilient city might be. It was interesting to undertake this workshop in the context of Andrews' and Duggan's research essay on 'Situation Rooms' in the city. Their model of thinking has helped us recognize the importance of arts and cultural spaces as sites in which individuals and communities develop and share their specific understandings of New Orleans. We are interested in how this thinking might lead us to frame such places - and our funding of them - in terms of tolerance for multiple perspectives, histories and identities in the city.

We have very much valued working with Andrews and Duggan. Their research has enabled us to connect in new and significant ways with City Hall (through NOHSEP), with arts organizations in the city around the idea of a new arts network, and has challenged us to think about our existing activities in the city with a renewed sense of the importance of this work for the future of New Orleans. We look forward to working with Andrews and Duggan in future iterations of the project.

Warm regards,



Alphonse Smith
Acting Director



IMPACT STATEMENT – Performing City Resilience

It was a privilege to participate in the work of Dr. Stuart Andrews and Dr. Patrick Duggan at several points over the course of their Performing City Resilience (PCR) project in New Orleans. Their program coincided with a particularly dynamic moment in the history of Southern Rep Theatre, and the PCR project provided a fruitful framework for our own institutional plans and priorities during that time.

When Drs. Andrew and Duggan visited New Orleans in spring 2018, Southern Rep was in the midst of construction on a long-awaited permanent venue, after years of performing itinerantly in multiple venues across the city. By the time they returned in 2019, we had spent nearly a full season on site in our new space—where we were pleased to host a workshop event. Our participation in PCR project events was materially significant in shaping our approach to programming in the new venue, and it deepened our understanding of ourselves and our work within a context of resilience—both at the institutional and civic levels.

As a result of engaging with the PCR research events in 2018, Southern Rep significantly broadened our strategy around programming for our new venue, with a particular emphasis on anchoring ourselves not only within our artistic community (a given throughout our planning processes), but also within the City of New Orleans. Our second stage has always been imagined as a home for performing arts of all kinds, but due in no small part to our participation in the PCR project, we found ourselves bringing many different events into our space once we opened the doors. City agencies in the areas of public health and economic development hosted meetings and convenings on our second stage in the early days of operation in our new building; we are also working with the city's leading community foundation to host a high-profile donor circle event right here at Southern Rep.

The informal networking opportunities provided by the PCR workshops were of palpable benefit to our thinking as well, particularly by providing insight into other organizations' perspectives on resilience in a civic context. To see how small arts organizations are grappling with these issues and to learn that both our city's Arts Council and City Hall itself are placing the arts within a broader resilience framework is instructive, heartening, and inspiring; it also showed us where we have allies in this work within our field locally.

Similarly, the distillation of the researchers' 2018 visit into their Situation Rooms paper for *Liminalities* provided a useful reflection back to us on our own work and our role within a community context. In the paper, our own questions and priorities about issues of permanence, gentrification, and the porous relationship between indoors and outdoors were placed in juxtaposition with both another performing arts venue and our city itself. In this transitional year, as we planned to move to a venue after being itinerant, this deep consideration of how venues themselves are still permeable, flexible, and *themselves* a performative negotiation of identity provided helpful context for our programmatic plans for the new space.

This expanded scope for our vision might seem insignificant, but it represents a fundamental shift in our own understanding of the role of the arts in our city's fabric. As theatre-makers and as an institution, we believe inherently in the power of art to change people's lives and to build



community. As a theatre taking hold of a major physical plant with an ambitious programmatic vision, we are committed to making Southern Rep a hub for the arts and a home for artists. In these ways, we certainly understand ourselves as part of a vibrant city.

However, our work with the PCR project deepened that understanding to place us within the framework of resilience specifically. In New Orleans more than in most places, perhaps, we are all intimately acquainted with the notion of resilience in terms of disaster recovery and water management. But we at Southern Rep are resilient, too, as a theatre forging a new and powerful identity after six years without a home. (We lost our long-term lease in 2012.) As artists, we have not framed the work we do within that context until now—we make art because that's what we do. However, the PCR research and the subsequent workshops (one hosted at Southern Rep in 2019) helped us raise our gaze and think seriously about how our programming fosters resilience more broadly, and how it fits into a city-wide cultural infrastructure.

This is not an inconsequential movement in our thinking. After our work with the PCR project, now, when we ask ourselves how our programming helps build community, we have a wider view and more solid grounding in this resilience framework. As just a small example: we have committed our outreach and engagement strategies even more fully than we had originally envisioned to activities that incorporate the shops and restaurants on our immediate block. We have organized a neighborhood pub crawl, we have hosted block parties led by neighboring arts and education non-profits, and we have built a community gathering series on our second stage around healing and wellness.

Art remains at the heart of what we do at Southern Rep, and it anchors all our programmatic plans and priorities. What has changed thanks to the opportunity to work with the PCR research has been to root our art even more firmly in the fertile ground of resilience. How does the mere act of art-making shore up our community? How does our new venue function as a supportive home base for a resilient network of artists? How do the connections we foster among artists, audiences, and our neighbors penetrate into civic spaces we never imagined? These are questions that are real and motivating for us in our planning and programming as we grow into our new venue, and we firmly believe that a framework of resilience for our own institution and for our place within a resilient city is a powerful and transformative tool moving forward. We would welcome future opportunities to work with the project authors or to host subsequent workshops and events that push this exciting research forward.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Aimée".

Aimée Hayes
Producing Artistic Director, Southern Rep Theatre

New Orleans, Louisiana
September 15, 2019