



April 21, 2017

Executive Summary - Community Open House

To kick off our strategic planning effort, about 120 people gathered and participated in the four discussion groups, and rotated so that each group could discuss the four topics offered. Certain themes re-emerged throughout the topics and this summary aims to point those out, rather than focus on specific suggestions for each topic. The full notes are attached for your reference.

Approximately 120 people attended the Open House, including many community residents, artists, partners, educators and business owners.

There were **six potential goals** listed that the BVOH/RWMT could have, and people voted on their importance – these are the results:

1. Preserving local African-American history & culture (10,008 points)
2. Providing affordable high quality arts education to Bayview youth (9,600 points)
3. Increasing community cohesion (common sense of place) (6,500 points)
4. Supporting emerging Bayview artists (6,300 points)
5. Providing access to high quality arts & culture (5,600 points)
6. Becoming a destination for people outside the Bayview (2,700 points)

Additional comments under Item 1 - Preserve African American History

Participants expressed a desire for the following:

1. Display information about the history of the building and how it fits in with the community and its history
2. Have more programs that highlight themes that promote the diaspora culture and create a neighborhood identity

Additional comments under Item 4 - Support Local Emerging Artists

3. Opportunities for young local emerging artists to perform and showcase their work
4. Opportunities for youth to learn about theatre tech and opportunities to work for the BVOH.
5. A safe place for youth, additional youth programs, youth advisory council

Communication and Connecting with Community

1. Promotion on Facebook and by email is not enough to reach everyone
2. People "on hill" are not being reached
3. Building needs signage/marquee to let community know what's going on
4. Building should display a more friendly/inviting ambience to the outside, especially on 3rd Street side
5. More open hours where public is welcome
6. Clearer communication of rental fees and procedures
7. Increase welcoming "vibe"
8. Community would like to know about how decisions about programming are made
9. Be inclusive of people from all cultures

Events and Programs people want to see

There is a large range of diverse types of programs and events different people want to see. A few examples:

1. African American: music, theatre, discussion forums, open mic, movies, book panels, visual art shows, dance
2. Talent and open mic shows
3. World music, community theatre
4. Soul food, Mexican food, food festival
5. LGBTQ events for both adults and youth for gay pride month/June
6. Health Fair, Black Owned Business event, Diversity events for changing community
7. Event series with a common theme

People are Grateful for:

1. Activities, events, internships and other opportunities for kids
2. Support for and helping create community
3. Creating dialogue for the future
4. Events that engage the community
5. Being able to rent space for private parties
6. Being the last beacon of socializing for Black SF

This last subject was broader and not specific to BVOH, but BVOH can play a role in the process and support/conduct some of the activities mentioned.

Forming a Cultural District in Bayview

What can help make that happen, what would it look like

1. Preserving local African American History is important to the community
2. Recognize and patronize local African American businesses
3. Merchants should do events around Black History Month
4. More afro-centric events
5. Knowing what cultural resources already exist
6. There are many churches and CBOs
7. Merchants need to actively participate
8. Include Chinese and Native American history as well
9. Record history through the arts

Notes for Bayview Opera House Ruth Williams Memorial Theatre Vision Meeting | April 21, 2018

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DISCUSSION #1

What kinds of activities/programs would you like to see at Bayview Opera House/Ruth Williams Memorial Theater?

Summary:

Mission Creeping: a gradual shift in objectives during the course of a military campaign, often resulting in an unplanned long-term commitment.

The term Mission Creep was brought up several times with different groups throughout the overall conversation. Many expressed their concern of the Bayview Opera House programming activities that don't align with the organization, so they offered the following suggestions:

- Activities that feature emerging artists
- A program that teaches financial literacy
- An adult creative writing class; storytelling series
- A theater tech program for youth, so they can work at the Opera House.
- An event that focuses on the history of the community
- Tutoring programs
- More collaborations with other community serving organizations
- More events that showcase local talent; singers, actors, etc
- Events for younger adults 25-30+
- Racially diverse events
- African Diaspora themed events
- Movie Nights: Black Panther?

There is a desire for a more inviting environment. The community would like the opera house to have a presence that represents more of the history of the community, like photos of previous events, a photo wall (similar to 1300 on Fillmore's Heritage Wall) and more information about the impact of Ruth Williams. Danny Glover's name was brought up a lot. People want him to reconnect with the Opera House, and bring along other influencers for a talk with the community. Transportation was also brought up. If there was a regular shuttle that would help seniors and youth that live on the hill to the opera house for events, that would be helpful.

DISCUSSION #2: GOALS

Facilitator Questions: BVOH/RWMT 6 Expressed Goals

Many were not aware that these were the goals of BVOH/RWMT

1. Increasing Community Cohesion?

- Ideas from the community:
 - BVOH/RWMT should bring a focus/theme to events; Some expressed that the BVOH/RWMT has too many events and that they are not well participated

2. Providing access to high quality arts & culture?

- Community members expressed their concern about the distinction between high art and other art multiple times.
- They expressed the desire to celebrate diversity and acknowledge existing cultures in the Bayview and some believe the idea of classical lessons rejects this but some also liked the idea of classical lessons and ceramic lessons...
- Suggestion to BVOH/RWMT: provide African dance, music, and drumming lessons to promote the diaspora culture and create a neighborhood identity
- Quotes: “All art is equal.” | “Who decides what is high art?”
- They also expressed their ideas on what access should incorporate:
 - BVOH/RWMT should incorporate the talent that exists within the community (incubation process).
 - Some asked “who chooses the entertainment?” and expressed the desire to have more access to the planning process of entertainment at BVOH/RWMT

3. Providing affordable high quality arts education to Bayview youth?

- Many expressed the concern that education should not be confined to just arts
- Ideas:
 - Provide free education and not just for the youth (include seniors); “Be a place for all ages.” Create a space for the youth and seniors to learn from each other
 - Encourage local theaters and invite local schools

4. Preserving local African-American history & culture?

They expressed the desire to have BVOH/RWMT reflect community pride within the building.

Ideas:

- Should show the history of Ruth Williams & the Community at BVOH/RWMT
 - Give the community an opportunity to act for itself
 - Only a part of the city looks like this still
- Create a Cultural Week, dedicated to Asian-Americans, Latin-Americans, and African-Americans and promote it well to ensure a high, diverse attendance
 - Some would like this through an African-American lense or mixed race lense
- The Board should reach out more and interact with the community. Ex. town hall meetings
- Need to create an opportunity to break down barriers:
 - Culturally specific places are great, however Asian Americans are not reflected in BVOH/RWMT. There is a lack of communication between Asian-Americans and African-Americans.
 - Need to create an opportunity to break down barriers
 - Stated Goal: “Bring the Asian-American community in the conversation with the Opera House and African-American community.
 - There was a disagreement over the responsibility of doing this

5. Becoming a destination for people outside the Bayview?

- Should not be a short term, stated goal; becoming a destination for outsiders should come after it is a destination locally
- How can BVOH/RWMT become a destination?
 - Ideas for events
 - Slams, become a jazz center
 - Tech shops, business shops, employment/hiring events
 - Expanding education beyond the arts

6. Support Emerging Bayview artists?

- Many expressed the importance increasing support for local artists. It was expressed multiple times that the BVOH/RWMT should be a place where artists can express opinions and political beliefs.
- Ideas:

- Create affordable access for artists (local) at no fee to showcase their work

What should be important goals of the BVOH/RWMT?

- Old Values are not reflected today, “What were Ruth William’s Goals?”
Voting Results on the 6 Goals

Attendees voted for the goals they prioritized by depositing fake money into any of the six different boxes that were labeled with one of the six goals. Each voter was given \$1000 (10 x \$10 bills).

Question: If you were a funding agency and you had one thousand dollars to spend, how would you fund these goals? You can spread your money however you like.

Results (highest to lowest):

1. Preserving local African-American history & culture (\$10,008)
2. Providing affordable high quality arts education to Bayview youth (\$9,600)
3. Increasing community cohesion (\$6,500)
4. Supporting emerging Bayview artists (\$6,300)
5. Providing access to high quality arts & culture (\$5,600)
6. Becoming a destination for people outside the Bayview (\$2,700)

DISCUSSION #3: Cultural Arts District

Minutes

GROUP 1 (18 people)

Question 1: How can we preserve African-American history in the Bayview?

Facilitator: "There's no representation of Linda Brooks in the Bayview/Linda Brooks-Burton Library"

"Need more exposure of African-American culture through literature, art, history, and books. At events, need pictures and art about the history. At BVOH/RWMT, there's no placard, statues, and throughout the Bayview."

"The white folks said I couldn't name the Bayview Opera House after Ruth Williams. [Mentions] we have a white woman running BVOH/RWMT"

Facilitator: "There are different opinions, we don't have a problem with white people, but with people coming into the Bayview and saying what should go on. How do we preserve the history?"

"Adam Roger's Park - Do you know that he was shot here?"

"We take care of our children and get developers out of here"

"More afrocentric events"

"Identifying what's already here"

GROUP 2 (~ 15 people)

Question 2: What locations in the Bayview best identify with African-American history?

Facilitator: "...What buildings or individuals should be celebrated for their contribution to BVHP?"

"1201 Mendell St; [Their] building has been a community center since the 1950s and has hosted nonprofits, youth services, etc."

" All Hallows Church, Mother Brown, and St.Paul's' Shipwreck Church.

"Mr.C; (he's passed away) and his son is a cop now"

Facilitator: "**How can merchants support culturally relevant activities? "**

"By promoting healthy food and doing more events around African-American History Month." We can celebrate & do parades ourselves."

“Take the SF Sister City as an example and do it with an African City.”

“Where are the corner stores and check cashing centers? They’re not involved [in the community] yet have a lot of issues around them.”

“We should take from the Mission Graduates idea of folks patronizing restaurants not frequently visited. There are four elementary, middle, and high schools. Merchants should use funds to support schools for innovative things.”

Facilitator: “What would you like to see as culturally relevant activities; activities where people get to know each other. Where would [the African-American Cultural District] start?”

“Evans to the Shipwreck”

“There are hotbeds: the Plaza, Sam Jordans, the two gas stations.

“ In the Castro they do plaques on the streets. We should look at other examples, the sidewalks could be a continuation of the poles [on Third St.]. We should include the long history of the Chinese and Native American history.

Facilitator: “This is a conversation about the African-American legacy and the preservation of it.”

GROUP 3 ~ 12 people

Question 1: How can we preserve African-American History in the Bayview?

“Through public art, murals...”

“ [Through] a written history...”

“ Should do a Ruth Williams play, she was a playwright...”

Facilitator: “ Where should the African-American Cultural District start and end in the Bayview?”

“The whole district”

“ What is a cultural district? Like Chinatown?”

“Chinatown is not a cultural district”

“What does it mean? What is the effect of having one or not?”

Facilitator: “We want to know what the perimeters should be”

“What does a cultural district have?”

Facilitator: “ We have over 10 churches, 33 black-owned businesses. We already have the black culture. The point of the cultural district designation is to preserve it”

Facilitator: “What are some historical landmarks that should be recognized?”

“The Big 5, Sam Jordans, there’s a couple of buildings by the Shipyard, the Bayview YMCA, Sundown, and the Southeast Facility.”

Facilitator: “If we don’t decide, someone else will decide for us?”

“ [It] should concentrate the designation to 3rd St. There’s not enough attention there and it should focus on retail.”

Facilitator: “How can merchants support culturally relevant activities?”

“The BVOH/RWMT does”

“More neighborhood merchants participating”

“Pop-up businesses”

“Monthly open-mic”

“Everything after 5pm shuts down. We need more place open”

Attendee: “Is there a fee to do an event at the Opera House?”

Facilitator: “I’m not sure if there is a rate”

GROUP 4**Question: How can we preserve African American History in the Bayview?**

“Need to look at other places like the Mission. They’re preserving..”

“Through the arts”

“They used to have plaques and a timeline of the Japanese here: metal plaques of their faces.”

“We can tell the whole story of how the Bayview came to be”

Facilitator: How can the merchants participate? Black people are the most underrepresented people in the country.

“The people here are the best resource/ asset. We should have oral history, theater, and film document the people here. People in the future should see recorded history.

“It’s more than just the pretty parts. The history needs to be represented”

“Educate people on how to prevent gentrification. When the owner of a house dies, why is the first move to sell the house. It’s an olive branch for the white people to move in.”

“The BVOH/RWMT needs history represented. The new people here don’t know. “There are empty storefronts on 3rd St. They should showcase history of the Bayview through art.”

DISCUSSION #4

How can the BVOH/RWMT better connect w/ the Bayview Community?

Most of the comments and feedback fell into the following categories:

Outreach
Environment

Programming
Arts

- **OUTREACH**

Many felt there was a lack of awareness of events and there is room for improvement in marketing. Multiple people expressed that they only hear about BVOH/RWMT events through Facebook and notifications were last-minute.

- Ideas on other forms of communication:
 - Direct mailing (“The Symphony does a great job)
 - Flyering (“Especially down 3rd St.)
 - Newspapers, radio, and black local media
 - Local church bulletins
 - Local businesses
- Places that need more outreach:
 - Advertise more to residents on the “hill”
 - Expand outreach beyond the Bayview; reach out to other neighborhoods and even the East Bay
- Promotion at BVOH/RWMT
 - Larger signage/ marquis on the building to promote upcoming events
 - Have youth outreach workers
 - Hiring more staff for marketing
- Cross collaborations with other organizations
 - Organizations mentioned: Southeast Health Clinic, STAR, Boys and Girls Club, BEACON

- **ENVIRONMENT**

- Building exterior is not inviting; “The 3rd St. side of the building doesn’t feel inviting as the front”
- Increase welcoming “vibe”
- There should be a Welcome Hub/Bayview visitor’s center
- Longer hours of operation that are open to the public; less private events and more public events
- Highlight history of the space and Ruth Williams

- Displays of history (to educate)
 - Pictures of old buildings
 - Village Ideology
 - Green, open space; trees, not rocks
- **PROGRAMMING**

Would like to see programming that

 - Addresses difficulties/solutions for folks to stay in SF (against all odds)
 - Allows networking with BVOH/RWMT staff
 - Brings in local artists
 - Provides a safe, affirmative place for the youth, where they can express themselves.
 - Is more consistent
 - Examples: First Fridays, monthly events, regular Farmers' Market
 - Ideas:
 - Gay Pride events
 - Social justice forum
 - Movie Nights
 - Intergenerational learning/tech
 - Book Panels
 - Black Business Day
 - Town Hall Meetings
 - Senior Education
 - Bayview Museum
 - Drop In Classes
- Ideas for Youth Programming
 - Theater workshops for kids, culminating in community play (and adults)
 - STEM Programs
 - Field trips for kids (Opera House van)
 - Bring kids here for activities
 - Taking kids out of the community (esp. For free nights)
 - Create youth council (Two-Year Term)
 - Self-planning
 - Used to have a youth Ambassador program
 - Youth curator program (summer) like Schomburg Center in NYC
 - Scholarships for programs that have costs or have completely free programs
- Rental Fees

- Would like clearer information on prices for renting
 - Are there community discounts?
 - Would like to have Point People for helping folks understand; Not just forms on the website

- **ARTS**

- Talent Show
- Open Mic
- Support emerging artists
- Experiential Art
- Writing Programs
- Training theater
- STAR and BVOH/RWMT Collaboration
- Healing arts
- Art technology/STEM Art
- Art and Dance Classes for all ages
- Free cultural programming
- Youth curator
- Black media
- Drumming
- Art showcase
- AA film festival
- World music

Votes on Movie Series Titles

Question: What would be the best title for a movie series that focuses on themes of social justice, civil rights, and similar themes?

Attendees were given five beans and voted by dropping their beans into jars labeled with a title

Votes ranked from highest to lowest:

- *Truth to Power Cinema*: 79
- *Black Light Cinema*: 68
- *Free Peoples Cinema*: 31
- *Wide Awake Cinema*: 15
- *New Peoples Film Series*: 12

What kind of words come up when you think of BVOH/RWMT? (Post-its)

- Radically inclusive
- A monthly showcase
- African American culture, tradition, history, family, community
- Sunny
- Changes
- Family
- Community
- Safe
- Summer
- Kids
- Bayview Opera House
- Peach
- History
- Black culture
- Opera
- Theater
- Music
- Community
- Art in all its forms
- Programs for the youth + kids
- Community
- Theater
- Films + documentaries
- Music
- Performance
- History
- Community
- Stories
- Support

Share ONE thing you are grateful for about the BVOH/RWMT? (Post-its)

- Being able to host any event or party
- The programs
- The activities, the opportunities they have for us kids, high school social
- The events and programs
- The programs and the public events they host
- Community
- Neighborhood
- BVOH helps support and creates community
- Thankful for the community center gathering space and the activities
- All type of events that will engage the community. You are doing a great job!
- The events
- For the events available for everyone but especially the youth
- The events, programs, community. BVOH is doing good!
- The staff
- Creating dialogue for the future
- Potential access to a diverse programming and presenters
- Internship opportunities for college students and local youth
- Being the last beacon of socializing for Black SF
- I know so many of my neighbors and consider many to be friends
- Being able to come here dance, have fun and be with others
- That it is (and continues to be) a hub for the Bayview community
- The cultural events!

What kinds of activities/programs/events would make BVOH/RWMT a cultural hub? (Post-its)

- African American drumming and art activities
- LGBTQ events for both adults and youth for gay pride month/June
- African American musical concerts
- African American theater
- Concerts, dances, literary readings, theater please!
- Soul food event and Mexican
- A big showcase with art, everyone's culture here in the Bay Area
- Diversity events for changing community
- Showing documentaries/movies related to AA community and other minorities.
Music is always good too!
- Neighborhood talent show (All ages!)
- African American social justice forums
- Arts programming 7 days a week
- Bayview museum
- African American film festival
- Open Mic + Unity events + town halls
- Used for arts/theater to community
- Open mic events - poetry, rap, musician, band, singing
- Make it like an after school program so everyone feels comfortable
- Art
- History on the area (entertaining)
- Food festival
- Maybe an art showcase of cultural African art or art done by black people
- Art galleries featuring local AA artists
- African American book panels
- Arts leadership programs for local youth and community members
- Black owned business all day event
- Health fair
- Dance classes for the youth
- Performance art every week
- World musc
- Local artist walk
- Neighborhood hall meetings
 - Let us know what's happening
 - Neighborhood supervisor in attendance
 - Voice concerns