

a city without art?



A REPORT BY THE


EASTSIDE
**CULTURE
CRAWL
SOCIETY**

OCTOBER 2019

A hand-drawn sign on a wooden board. The sign is a vertical rectangle with rounded corners, containing the word 'ARTIST' in large, bold, capital letters. The letters are drawn with a pencil, and the board has a weathered, light-colored wood grain. A hand is visible in the background, holding a pencil and drawing the sign. The background is a warm, orange-toned image of a hand holding a pencil, with a blurred street scene in the distance.

If this rapid rate of artist displacement continues, we will become A CITY WITHOUT ART.

NO NET LOSS, PLUS! means the protection of existing studios, replacement when redevelopment occurs, and expansion of art production space.



Established 23 years ago, the Eastside Culture Crawl Society's premier annual event showcases the work of over 500 visual artists in studios across more than 80 buildings every year in the Eastside Arts District. Over the last ten years, our artists have been creating in over 300 buildings here—the arts district with the highest density of visual artists in Canada.

We have heard many stories of artists leaving Vancouver including when John was in Berlin last summer for their equivalent of our Eastside Culture Crawl. In the first studio he visited, he talked to a young woman from Vancouver who had recently moved to Berlin to pursue her career as an artist after being evicted twice due to redevelopment in East Vancouver.

This is not an uncommon narrative among artists in Vancouver. We see the loss of artist space escalating in the Eastside Arts District as low rent, light-industrial areas ideal for visual artist studios are now prime redevelopment sites. We used to be shocked with studio evictions, but they seem so commonplace now.

If this rapid rate of artist displacement continues, we will become a **CITY WITHOUT ART**. The city requires the **immediate implementation of a zero net loss policy in addition to a policy that expands and incentivizes artists studio space: NO NET LOSS, PLUS!** These policies would protect and expand spaces for production; spaces that are affordable and provide security of tenure, all within the context of a synergistic Eastside Arts District.

The following report outlines the extent to which the Eastside Arts District has been affected by displacement, the causes of this displacement and most importantly, how we can achieve the goal of **NO NET LOSS, PLUS!** We are confident that this is attainable.

We thank those that contributed to the preparation of this report through financial and other support. This support has greatly deepened the analysis presented.

Yours,



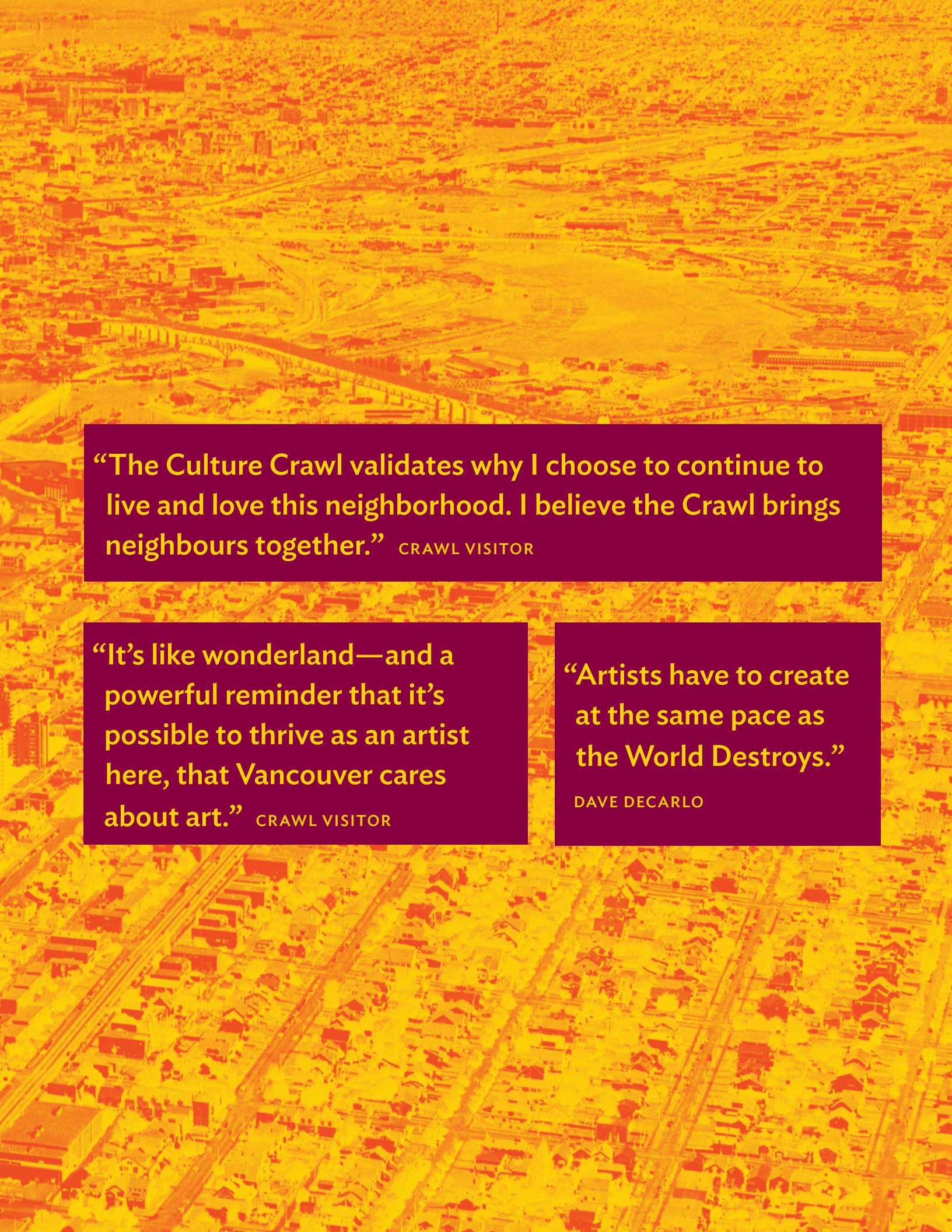
Esther Rausenberg
Artistic & Executive Director



John Steil, RPP FCIP
Board Member and
Chair, Space Committee

Dis-place-ment is a removal of something(s) from its place. Displacement entails both displacing and being displaced; an entanglement that inherits visible and invisible qualities, thus demanding personal, socio-economic, cultural, political and environmental considerations as well as critical observations. As artists in Vancouver, we continually face displacement.

ROJIA DADASHZADEH ET AL



“The Culture Crawl validates why I choose to continue to live and love this neighborhood. I believe the Crawl brings neighbours together.” CRAWL VISITOR

“It’s like wonderland—and a powerful reminder that it’s possible to thrive as an artist here, that Vancouver cares about art.” CRAWL VISITOR

“Artists have to create at the same pace as the World Destroys.”

DAVE DECARLO



executive summary

Artists play a key role in building community, fostering creativity and leading urban regeneration. Arts and culture are recognized as key economic sectors for growth, attracting investment and highly skilled workers in post-industrial global cities, including Vancouver. While museums, galleries and cultural centres receive funding to encourage cultural consumption and celebration of artistic talent and creativity, the working conditions of artists and their production spaces have not received adequate public or government attention.

This report is the first detailed assessment of the loss of visual artist production spaces in the Eastside Arts District in Vancouver. This report identifies rising rents, lack of tenure security and a shrinking supply of older industrial sites suitable for use as artist studio space as the key factors displacing artists.

Two surveys were completed over the past 12 months, gathering data on over 300 artist spaces covering over 2,000 artists in the Eastside Arts District. While the ECCS has been aware of rising rates of artist displacement and property redevelopment, the results of this survey reveal the true scale of challenges faced by visual artists.

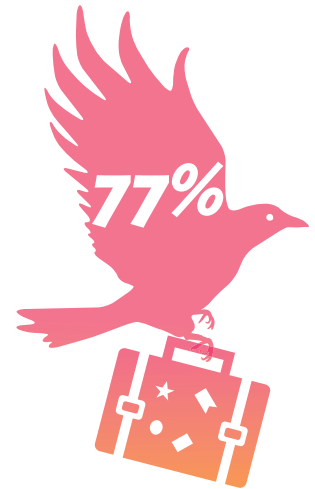
The median rental rate of studio space has increased by 65% over the past 8 years, while visual artists remain amongst the most economically undercompensated job category with income levels significantly below the national median in Canada. Close to



MEDIAN INCREASE OF
STUDIO SPACE RENTAL RATES



SQUARE FOOTAGE OF
STUDIO SPACE LOST OVER
THE PAST 10 YEARS



ARTIST SURVEY RESPONDENTS
SEEKING TO RELOCATE DUE
TO RENT INCREASE AND
PROPERTY DEVELOPMENT

The housing affordability crisis along with the loss of artist production spaces are threatening the financial viability of artists, but especially in the Eastside Arts District.

400,000 ft² of studio spaces have been lost as a result of residential or commercial conversions and redevelopment over the past 10 years. This volume of studio spaces represents just under 50% of locations used by artists. In a recent survey, 77% of artists responded that they are seeking to relocate—38% due to rental increases and 35% due to redevelopment, change in property ownership, or demolition.

Vancouver is home to the highest density of artists per capita in Canada and has a long tradition of well-established artist-run centres. Recent investment in large scale institutional facilities including the new Emily Carr University of Art & Design will increase the number of artists in the city. However, the housing affordability crisis along with the loss of artist production spaces are threatening the financial viability of artists everywhere in the city, but especially in the Eastside Arts District. To prevent further displacement of artists and the loss of production space, government needs to take a proactive approach by developing new policies and incentives to protect, enhance and grow the supply of commercial and industrial spaces suitable for artists. Zoning regulations, development incentives, land use restrictions and supportive funding streams are some of the recommendations presented in this report. A “no net loss, plus!” approach is urgently required to create a stable and supportive environment for artists.

acknowledgements

The Eastside Culture Crawl Society (ECCS) recognizes that we are working on the traditional, unceded ancestral territories of the x^wməθk^wəy'əm (Musqueam), Skwxwú7mesh (Squamish), and sə́lilwətaʔɛ́ (Tsleil-Waututh) peoples.

These areas are culturally significant sites in terms of their historic contexts, but also equally important as contemporary sites of gathering, learning and exchange.

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introduction



In 2007, artists came to the Eastside Culture Crawl Society (ECCS) upset, distraught, and confused about their tenure after learning that the owner of their studios at 901 Main Street had sold the property to a big developer.

Some thirty artists had been displaced by redevelopment plans changing the proposed use from commercial to residential. The ECCS met with the artists collective, the developer, attended City of Vancouver meetings, held meetings with the Development Services department at the City of Vancouver and presented to City Council in large numbers. Additionally, the ECCS offered support to the 901 Main Street artists through communiques to other artists and patrons. The City of Vancouver, including City Council, assured everyone that they heard the concerns of the arts community and were intent on making changes.

Sadly, in 2019, 12 years since the artists were evicted, 901 Main Street remains vacant. It is a deeply disappointing testament to the lack of government policies developed over this period to address challenges faced by visual artists in the City of Vancouver. The displacement of artists like those at 901 Main Street continues today.

What is displacement?

Sharon Zukin's classic study of the displacement of artists in Brooklyn during the 1980s, identifies gentrification as the transformation of inner-city neighbourhoods into attractive destinations for middle and upper middle class residents through residential (re)development of commercial and industrial spaces. This transformation is largely a result of the labour and investment of artists creating a vibrant culture and thriving local economy with a network of services and businesses. The symbolic capital ascribed to artists is often leveraged by developers and other commercial agents to capitalize on the increase in real estate value.

The displacement of artists has become a global phenomenon, fuelled by rising property prices and rents in inner-city areas that are pushing out artists who can no longer afford to live and work in these neighbourhoods. While the housing crisis in Vancouver is affecting a significant segment of the population, the loss of artistic production space is especially acute as former industrial lands are being redeveloped for housing, office, and mixed-use development.

The purpose of this report

This report draws urgent attention to the loss of suitable and affordable artist production spaces for visual artists practicing in the Eastside Arts District—the geographic scope of the annual Eastside Culture Crawl event organized by the ECCS for the past 23 years. Neighbourhoods within the Eastside Arts District are comprised of approximately one-third of Vancouver's artists and cultural workers and represent the highest concentration of artists and cultural workers residing in Vancouver, as reported in the Hill Strategies Report (2010), *Mapping Artists and Cultural Workers in Canada's Large Cities*.

The aim of this research report is twofold:

1. to analyze existing, lost and under-threat production spaces and examine factors limiting the availability of suitable and affordable art production spaces; and
2. to recommend strategies and policy tools to foster discussion and action aimed at securing, enhancing and expanding artist production spaces.



“Then it was on to 901 Main Street to say hello and good-bye, for the artists have been evicted to make way for the New Gentry. When I climbed the stairs, I tell you, it was déjà vu all over again. The same feel of the end of something that will never be again. Some say artists have been in that building for 30 years... And I’m struck again by the resilience that artists share with the Bedouins—an ability to pick up and keep moving.”

ALFRED DEPEW, 2009

This report has been prepared using data of visual artist production spaces collected over the past ten years by the ECCS and supplemented by fieldwork, research, and policy analysis over the past twelve months. The ECCS has focused on visual artists for this study for a number of reasons. First, this subgroup has specific space and amenity requirements that are primarily available in industrial/commercial settings; secondly, this is the sub-group whose needs are best understood by the ECCS and who are regularly represented by the ECCS. Finally, the resources available were insufficient to conduct a comprehensive study of all arts groups.

Visual artists have been identified as the most vulnerable and economically disadvantaged group amongst nine arts disciplines across Canada by the Hill Strategies Report (2016).

This report finds total individual average income for visual artists is lower than other arts disciplines and a significantly higher percentage of visual artists are self-employed. Visual artists derive a lower percentage of their total income from their arts-based work, which is a further indication of the precarious nature of self-employment, forcing them to rely on contract work or part-time jobs to supplement their income and support their arts practices.

the importance of art in vancouver

Art is not just of aesthetic value; rather it is intrinsically important for a society to function. The presence of art correlates with higher societal living standards. Specifically, art has a positive impact on the economy by increasing employment and encouraging innovation through creativity. It also has positive effects on metrics of satisfaction, health and education.

While many inaccurately consider art to be a financial liability, it is in fact an asset for the economy at all levels of government. Arts and culture contributed \$53.1 Billion to Canada's Gross Domestic Product (GDP) and, specifically, visual and applied arts contribute approximately 20% to GDP (Statistics Canada, 2019). In British Columbia, arts and culture industries contributed \$7.9 Billion to GDP in 2017, which is higher than agriculture, forestry, fishing and hunting (\$5.8 Billion) and utilities (\$6.3 Billion).

Furthermore, art increases employment. Across Canada, the labour force participation of artists is significantly greater than other sectors, including automotive manufacturing and utilities (Hill Strategies Report, 2016). The 183,200 artists represent almost 1% of the labour force and are contributing to economic growth in communities across Canada. Cultural jobs continue to increase in Canada at a rate of 1.6% in 2017 to 666,500. Visual and applied arts employment accounted for an increase of 3.3% during the same period (Statistics Canada, 2019). In BC, cultural jobs represented 4% of total jobs during the same period (Statistics Canada, 2019).

“We need to build a Vancouver that supports arts, culture, and small business. It’s not only good for our economy and community, but it helps us craft an identity for our city that’s vibrant and creative.”

KENNEDY STEWART, MAYOR OF VANCOUVER

The City of Vancouver has the highest concentration of artists per capita amongst Canada’s largest cities. However, the majority of artists live below the poverty line with 63% reporting an income of less than \$40,000/year and a median income of \$22,000/year (Hill Strategies, 2014 & City of Vancouver, 2019).

Art indirectly impacts the economy by encouraging creativity, provoking intellectual thought and building perspective. Engagement with art allows individuals to use creativity to drive innovation. In her study of Creativity and Innovation in Organizations, Harvard Business School Professor Teresa Amabile describes innovation as ‘the successful implementation of creative ideas within an organization’ (Forrester Consulting, 2014). Various studies have found a positive impact on a business through the exposure of employees to art, through increased profitability, the development of leadership skills, improvement in working relationships and increased creativity (Berthoin Antal and Straub, 2013). These studies suggest that the ability of art to widen perspectives and to promote openness to experiences underpins the benefits of creativity, which in turn leads to innovation and indirectly, a benefit to the economy (Berthoin Antal and Straub, 2013).

Experiencing art has also been shown to increase life satisfaction and health. Those engaging with the arts are reported to feel healthier than those who do not and generally self-report to have more life satisfaction (New Economics Foundation, 2014; Arts Council United Kingdom, 2014). Studies show that participation in art reduces social exclusion and isolation and increases the sense of safety and social cohesion in communities (Arts Council United Kingdom, 2014). The creative practice of art has been shown to reduce levels of cortisol, thereby reducing stress and improving mental health among study participants (Kamal, Ray and Muniz, 2016).

Participation in art and cultural activities also ameliorates education by improving mental performance among youth, through elevated self-esteem, critical thinking and improved resilience. Students from low-income families that participated in art activities in school were three times more likely to pursue a post-secondary degree than those who did not (Government of Ontario, 2016).

Access to art and cultural activities plays an important role in the quality of life for diverse groups in Vancouver; in order to ensure the social and educational benefits of participation in experiencing art, the City of Vancouver must maintain access to a rich diversity of artists that contribute to cultural activities.

the eastside culture crawl society

The Eastside Culture Crawl Society (ECCS) is a registered charitable organization that supports visual arts and culture in the eastside of Vancouver, British Columbia.

Mission/Mandate

The ECCS increases public appreciation of visual arts through exhibitions, presentations and events in the City of Vancouver. By promoting both emerging and established professional artists, ECCS increases exposure for artists, expanding audience engagement and fostering greater recognition for artistic talent in the community. ECCS presents a diverse and varied body of visual art, fine craft and design, providing a forum for the exchange of ideas between artists and the public.

The ECCS strives to:

1. educate and increase public appreciation of the visual arts through exhibitions, workshops, presentations and events;
2. preserve and promote the development of, and excellence in, the visual arts in Canada by providing opportunities to enable artists to train and produce their work.

The focus of the ECCS is to foster innovative networks between under-represented and self-represented artists and the broader public, increasing opportunities for public engagement and artistic exchange.

“I love the crawl cuz it’s a chance to not only mingle with half the city at once, but also to see the world thru other eyes.” CRAWL VISITOR

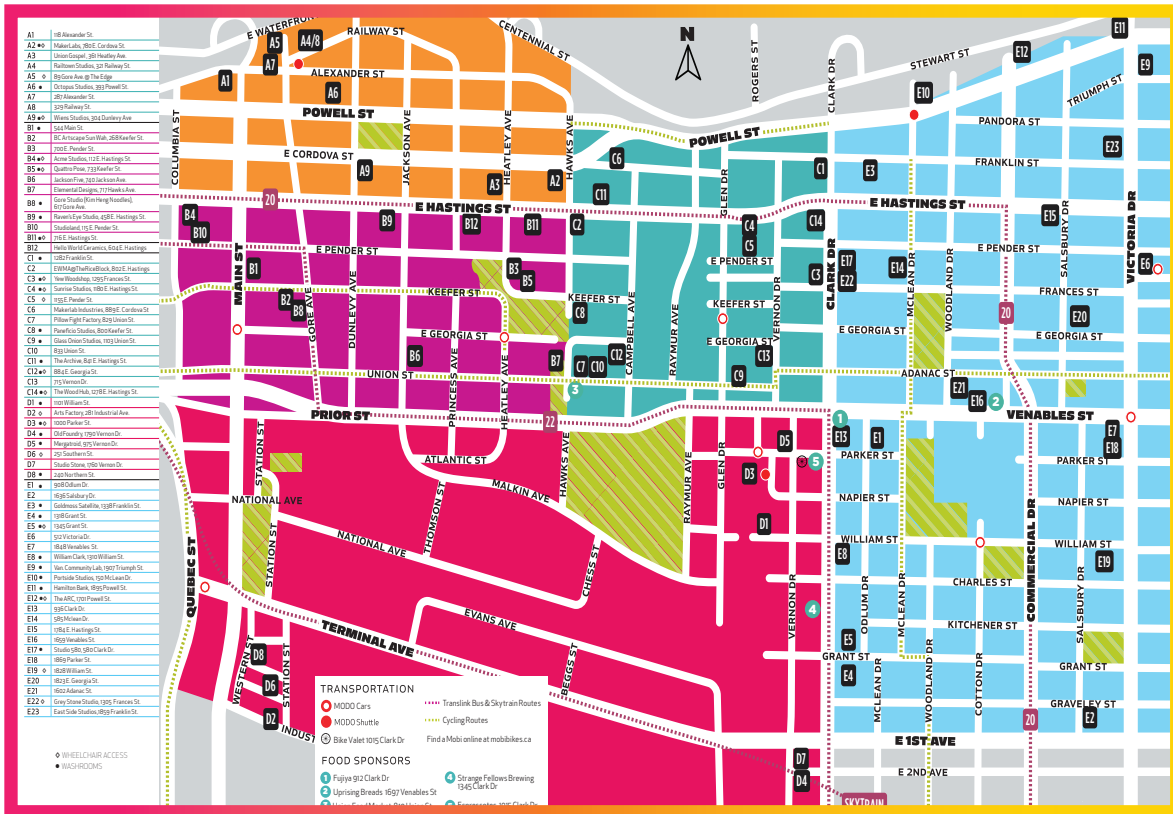
The Culture Crawl

The ECCS organizes and hosts the Eastside Culture Crawl, a visual arts, crafts and design festival and one of North America’s largest artist open-studio events. Each year, over 45,000 visitors experience the artwork of 500+ artists in over 80 buildings within the Eastside Arts District. This area located in Vancouver’s Eastside is bounded by Columbia Street to the west, Victoria Drive to the east, 1st Avenue to the south and the Waterfront to the north. There have been 2035 participating artists in the Culture Crawl over the past 10 years.

The Eastside Arts District is home to hundreds of artists—a distinctive arts and cultural ecology that does not exist anywhere else in Canada: Art Happens Here.



Parker Street Studios



Recognition of the distinctive identity of this area and the contribution of artists and arts organizations contained within it will contribute to the preservation and growth of the arts in Vancouver.

The ECCS successfully fulfills the need for visual artists to showcase their work to a large audience. It provides the residents of Metro Vancouver access to the dynamics of the Eastside Arts District and to the production of its visual art community. For many visitors, the festival is their first exposure to artists working in diverse mediums, including printmaking, glass blowing, painting, photography, furniture making, design, ceramics, sculpture and textiles. The festival has expanded its program beyond the four-day open-studio format to include juried exhibitions, opportunities for film and other media through ‘Moving Art,’ installations, and workshops.


The ECCS ‘Studio 101’ program provides arts programming for inner-city youth. The expanded program reinforces the overarching vision of the ECCS to provide opportunities for engagement between professional artists and the public.

ECCS & Production Space

Over the past 10 years, the ECCS has initiated several space initiatives. As a response to the evictions at 901 Main, ECCS organized the ‘Out of Space’ forum in April 2009 to bring awareness to the loss of studio space and explore solutions. The forum involved artists, building owners, city representatives, developers and architects, identifying a clear need for creating and protecting artist studio spaces.

In 2011, the ECCS developed an Artist Studio Needs Survey to determine rental rates paid by artists for studio spaces; this survey was updated in 2016. In 2012, ECCS initiated the 900 East Hastings Opportunity Assessment to review the viability of securing studio space at this location. In 2018, ECCS explored organizational capacity in the report ‘In Pursuit Of Visual Artist Production Space in East Vancouver’ (Holly Alyea) identifying ECCS’s role to promote, preserve and grow visual artist studio space in Vancouver’s Eastside Arts District.

the real estate development context



The cost of housing in Vancouver gets numerous headlines—every Metro Vancouver resident knows about it. The increase in residential real estate values has led to rapidly rising rents, creating a huge affordability gap. Given their generally lower economic bracket, artists find it even harder to find reasonably priced homes in the City of Vancouver. To combat becoming a “City Without Art,” it is necessary to understand the lesser publicized impacts of real estate forces on the reduction of studios for artists to produce art.

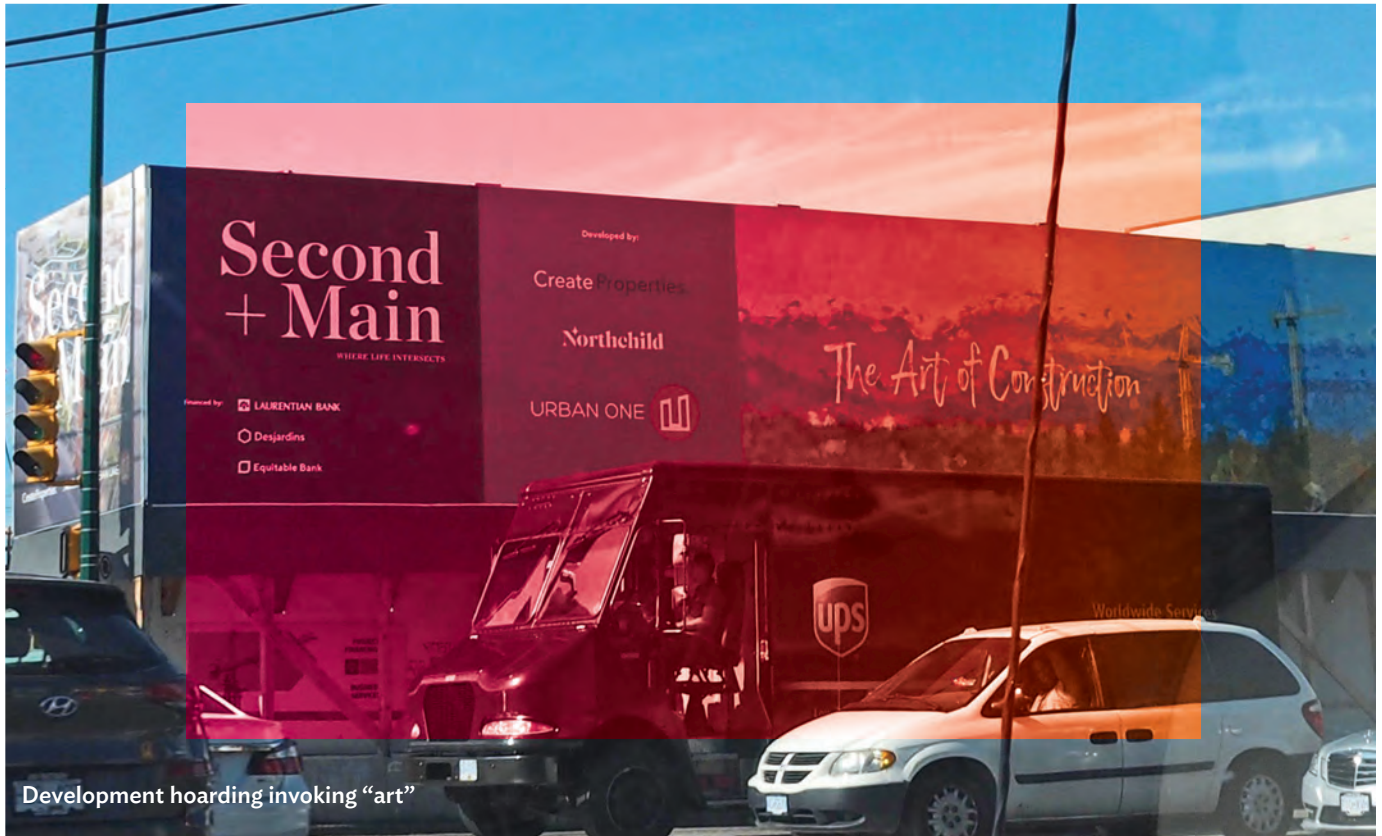
Artists are not only facing incredible difficulty in finding a home but also in finding a place to earn a livelihood—their art studio. This section contextualizes the role of real estate development and City of Vancouver policies that are contributing to the loss or rising unaffordability of suitable artist production spaces.

Industrial and Commercial Land

While the pressures on the viability of art production spaces have been slowly developing over time, they have now reached destructive levels. Although art is created in some home studios, most artists need to work in industrial and commercial areas. Over the last few decades, the amount of space available for artist studios in these areas has been greatly reduced as significant areas in Vancouver have been rezoned and converted to other uses. The shrinking supply of industrial land has led to significant displacement of artists and cultural producers. That is the first impact—the reduction of available areas suitable for artists.

“East Vancouver artists are living on hefty rents and borrowed time as they watch one block redevelop after another, resulting in the displacement of yet another studio. I feel that this pattern will continue, leading to an exodus of creatives.”

DISPLACEMENT ARTIST



Development hoarding invoking “art”

Policies with Unintended Consequences

Recent policies adopted by the municipal and provincial governments to increase housing supply and curtail speculative and foreign investment in residential properties, have yielded unintended harmful consequences for artist production spaces. Policies including the foreign buyers’ property transfer tax, speculation and vacancy tax, empty homes’ tax and short-term rental restrictions have reduced financial investment in the residential real estate market. This has shifted investor focus to the industrial and commercial sectors where there are greater profits to be realized as a result of increasing competition for a shrinking industrial land base. Supportive municipal policies encouraging residential and mixed use rezoning to expand the housing supply has led to further increases in industrial land values with speculation on zoning changes driving prices and rents higher. These policies are having an impact beyond their intended goals. To this end, the government has not responded to the deleterious impact of these

increased commercial real estate costs to artists. To date, sadly, the loss of artist production spaces has not been considered as a significant source of concern and has not prompted new policy tools to protect and enhance studio spaces.

21st Century Employment and Competition

The changing employment sector in Vancouver with a shift away from manufacturing and transportation sectors to the high technology sector has resulted in higher rents afforded by tech start ups, video game, film and special effects companies. The City of Vancouver has facilitated this shift through its planning policies. For instance, the definition of allowable uses defined by ‘creative manufacturing’ in the zoning policy was changed in Railtown by the City of Vancouver to include software development. The outcome is that artists have been evicted to welcome high technology companies, reflecting a significant net loss of long-standing space where art was made. Zoning changes and incentive policies are resulting in rapid transformation

“Our landlord is a developer, and our lease obligates us to pay any increase in property taxes and also has a demolition clause, meaning we can be evicted on a whim. The City’s taxation policy results in those working on the land bearing all the risk without the benefits of ownership.”

DISPLACEMENT ARTIST

of industrial spaces and older building stock in inner-city neighbourhoods and is leading to the loss of tenure, reduction of production space and a lack of suitable artist spaces.

Artist studios are generally in lower-rent areas that are most susceptible to redevelopment. Landlords, before they make the decision to redevelop, welcome artists that tolerate substandard conditions in old and poorly maintained buildings. Then, when developers see an opportunity, they evict artists and renovate for higher paying, often high-tech tenants. Marketing plans often feature the artistic community as a selling point—the irony is that artists cannot afford these new spaces.

Tax Increases

The City of Vancouver highlighted that property tax assessments for 11 studio locations have increased by 77% over the past five years in its

recently released *Culture Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture* report. Artists are mostly on month-to-month arrangements subject to triple-net contracts, which means that the artists, rather than their landlords, must absorb the increases in municipal property taxes.

Since artists are in properties with low building assessment value relative to the land value, the impact of market-based land-intensive assessments disproportionately punishes them—focusing higher taxes on these studios. Property taxation under the system of ‘highest and best use’ evaluates property values based on their full development potential. This system incentivizes redevelopment and displacement of tenants in older buildings and recently rezoned areas where buildings do not occupy the entire allocated Floor Space Ratio (FSR). In addition, some live/work artist spaces are being unfairly taxed at the commercial assessment rate.

Rising rental rates as a result of increases in property taxes impact artists disproportionately more than most residents of Vancouver as most artists are under compensated for their work and are not experiencing proportionate growth in their income or through the sale of their work. They do not have extra capital to cover these added costs. The small business sector throughout Vancouver has pointed out the significant impact of increases in property taxes as well.

City of Vancouver Planning Policies

Lastly (and related to the above) the expectations inherent in the City of Vancouver’s planning policy is an issue. Zoning grants rights to developers to redevelop, but does not protect existing artist spaces that are lost to redevelopment. The outcome is net loss of artist studio space. City of Vancouver planners state that their hands are tied. A recent submission from ECCS to the City of Vancouver about the loss of artist space from a specific redevelopment scheme was met with a referral to the arts and culture department, rather than meaningful efforts or discourse to protect the art production space. Developers of existing redevelopment projects, such as the Propeller site in Strathcona,



339 Railway Street

have expressed interest in including artist spaces in their developments, but point to the City of Vancouver’s policy of forcing the inclusion of housing. Unfortunately, the City of Vancouver’s current development planning policy does not support the protection of existing artist production space. As a result, a significant number of artists in the Eastside Arts District rely on the benevolence of a few arts-supportive landowners. While the ECCS and artists of the Eastside Arts District strongly appreciate this support, this stock of art production spaces remains vulnerable in the absence of explicit municipal protection through zoning regulations.

To avoid a ‘City Without Art,’ these challenges must be overcome—there is a need to ensure that artist production spaces are protected and expanded through supportive provincial and municipal regulations and policy.

“339 Railway Street once was a studio of charm—filled with a community of artists, sharing and collaborating. While I have managed to find a solo studio shortly before its transformation to an office space, I am isolated and I long for the vibrant atmosphere of working amongst other artists.” DISPLACEMENT ARTIST

cultural policy & community plans

While the City of Vancouver recognizes the importance of art and culture as an important pillar of social and economic development, various factors such as limited funding for artists, a lack of planning policy tools and relatively modest civic investment in securing production spaces have exacerbated the dearth of secure and affordable arts infrastructure.

Most cultural grant funding is distributed as annual operating expenses amongst the top five museums and large institutions in Vancouver. This leaves individual artists and collectives with limited and highly competitive access to a smaller pool of one-time production or project-based grants. The uneven distribution of grants and city resources is a hallmark of the ‘Creative City’ concept, aimed at leveraging arts and culture as a means for boosting tourism and cultural consumption through events and performances. These artistic services are leveraged to create a positive image of diversity, vibrancy and creativity to attract technology companies and the ‘creative class.’ This type of cultural or creative city policy is focused on cultural consumption—prioritizing high visibility exhibition spaces, while failing to adequately support visual artists and craftspeople who play a key role in the transformation of neighbourhood identities through the production of art.

The following City of Vancouver strategies and plans concerning art and culture are highlighted in this section:

- *Culture Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture (2020–2029)*
- *Downtown Eastside (DTES) Official Community Plan (2014)*
- *Policies concerning Railtown; and*
- *False Creek Flats Area Plan (2017).*

The City of Vancouver’s recent *Cultural Shift: Blanketing the City in Arts and Culture*, a 10-year strategic planning policy for expanding arts and cultural funding and capacity building, identifies securing 650,000 ft² of repurposed or new cultural space and enhancement of 150,000 ft² of existing space over the next 10 years. While the establishment of targets is a commendable addition, this policy fails to establish artistic discipline specific targets and also does not distinguish between spaces of production and exhibition which leads to concerns over a repetition of earlier funding priorities focused on large scale exhibition venues including theatres, galleries and music performance spaces.

The plan identifies a target of securing \$10 Million for a Cultural Spaces Fund, with private developer contributions making up the majority of funding. The City of Vancouver’s primary means for new and expanded cultural infrastructure is through Community Amenity Contributions (CACs), which are voluntarily negotiated with funding provided by developers during the rezoning process. One of the main concerns with this approach for funding arts



CONSIDER THIS

The process of rezoning industrial lands leads to displacement of existing tenants, including artists; despite the occasional addition of cultural amenity space, the end result of redevelopment is a NET LOSS of artist studio space.

and cultural infrastructure is that it overly relies on private funding secured in exchange for redevelopment of existing buildings, some of which are occupied by artists. The process of rezoning industrial lands leads to displacement of existing tenants, including artists, and despite the occasional addition of cultural amenity space, the end result is a NET LOSS of artist studio space. While the City of Vancouver benefits from new infrastructure, artists are forced to relocate permanently or face competition with commercial or technology industries for higher rents in new buildings.

The overwhelming majority of CACs have been allocated to services including affordable housing, public transit infrastructure, childcare, community centres, green spaces and other social infrastructure. Priorities for directing CAC funding are identified in consultation with City of Vancouver staff and in certain cases, through official community plans which identify specific infrastructure needs. The neighbourhood plans reviewed for this study do not prioritize artist production spaces or other types of facilities for artists.



The DTES Official Community Plan guides a 30-year vision and growth priorities in the DTES and surrounding area, such as funding, policy changes and redevelopment of Strathcona, Chinatown, Hastings Corridor, Gastown and waterfront industrial lands. Although preserving and creating new studios and facilities for artists and arts organizations is listed as one of the goals, the Public Benefits Strategy forming part of the community plan has not allocated any dollar value or space targets towards achieving this objective. Preserving artist production spaces as a priority is not mentioned and therefore, the CAC contributions have not been directed towards creating new artist spaces over the past five years since the plan was implemented. In comparison, the City of Vancouver has established targets of 20-30% of new housing units to consist of social and affordable housing in rezoned sites within the DTES.

Railtown, the area between Heatley, Main, and Alexander Streets and the railway tracks, is part of the DTES official local area plan. The industrial lands with large warehouses were previously occupied by hundreds of artists when industries moved out in the 1970s and 1980s. A combination of new building codes and zoning changes, however, has recently led to the eviction of a significant number of artists from this area. One

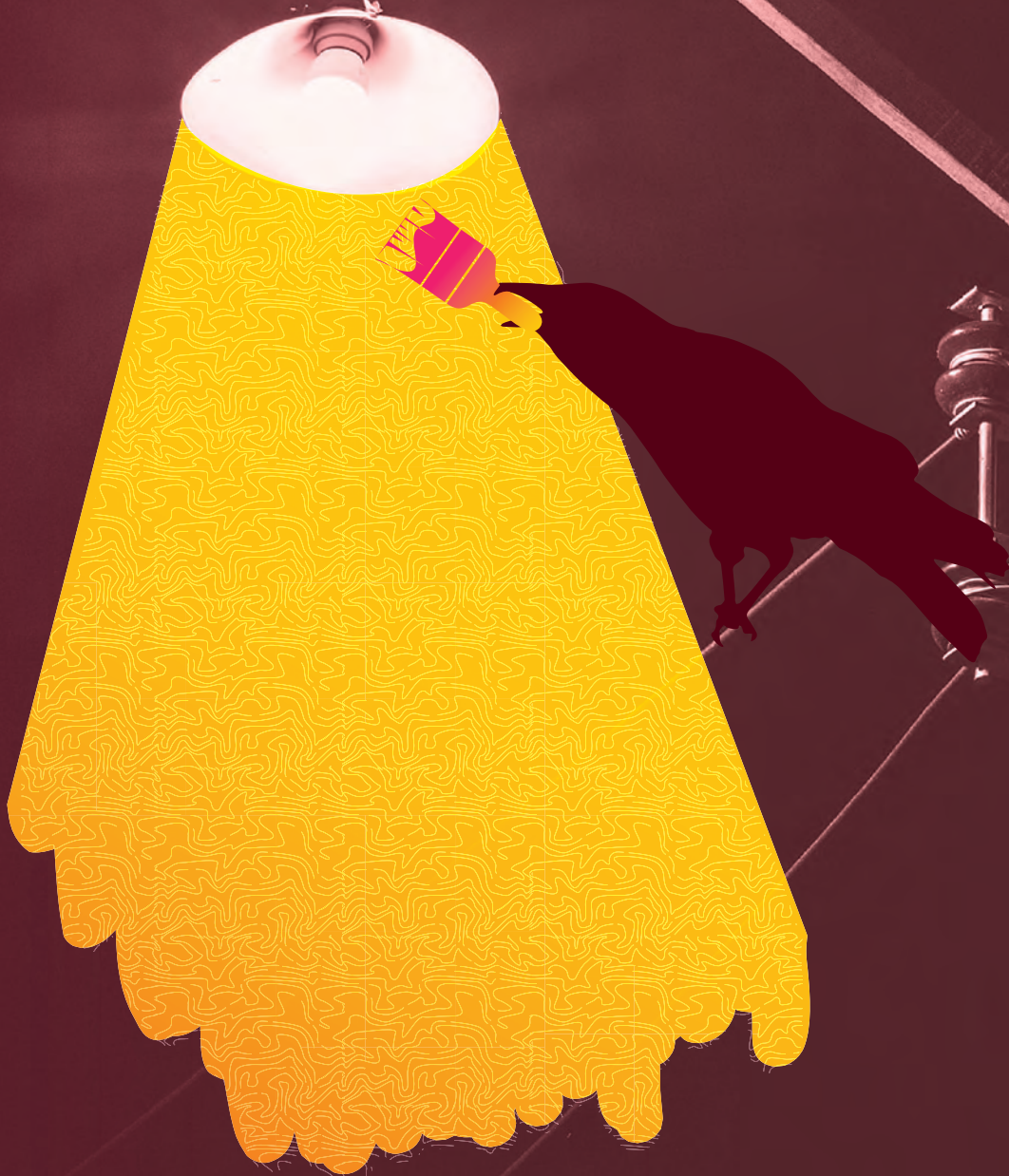
prominent example of this displacement is at 339 Railway Street where artists in affordable and long-term studios were displaced to redevelop the property for the recently amended ‘creative manufacturing,’ i.e. high-tech use.

The False Creek Flats has a high concentration of older, affordable artist production spaces on industrial lands. Nearly one in five businesses in this area identify as being part of the arts and culture sector with approximately 525,000 ft² of artist studio and rehearsal space. However, the False Creek Flats Area Plan, adopted in 2017, only prioritizes protecting 165,000 ft² of Class A and B artist studio space with limitations on acceptable uses and specific infrastructure requirements for each type of studio space.

This specific inclusion is to ensure protection of the existing 1000 Parker Street studio spaces—without any guarantee of affordability. It is surprising to see only one specific zoning policy, limited to one large site of artist studio space across the plan area covering 450 acres. Artist studios or production spaces are not protected on any other sites. On other sites in the plan area, while zoning regulations require and encourage the development of Class B artist studio spaces on the ground floor of new buildings, artist studios are classified along with light industrial uses. This joint classification does not result in new or expanded artist production spaces because technology, gaming, light industrial and other ‘creative’ manufacturing tenants can afford higher rents and monopolize spaces formerly occupied by artists, as has been previously experienced in Mount Pleasant and Railtown.

the questionnaire

The results presented in this section are based on survey data gathered from visual artists using an online questionnaire distributed through email lists from several large arts, culture and non-profit organizations including the ECCS and the City of Vancouver. A snowball sampling methodology was also used, asking respondents to forward the survey to other artists, thus expanding the outreach.

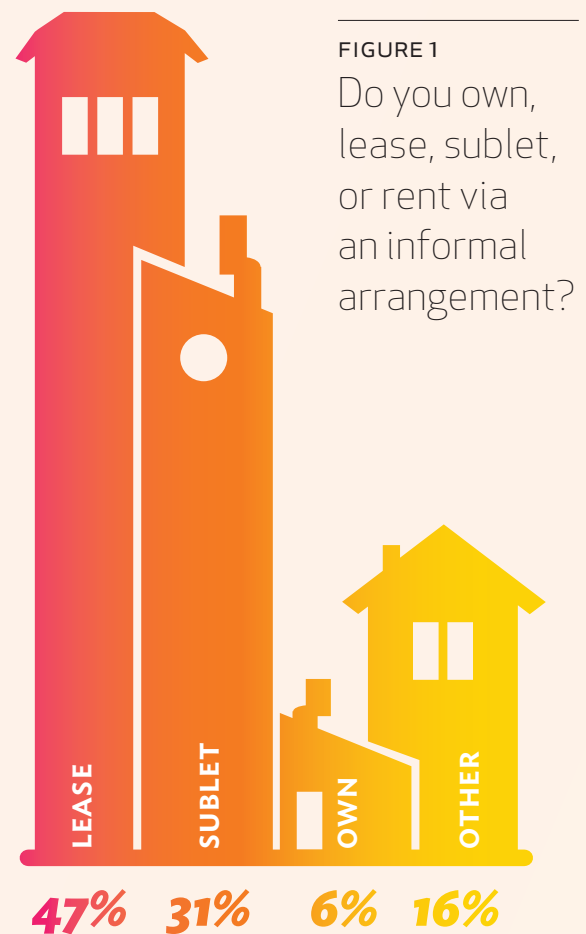


A list of addresses for distribution was compiled from the ECCS artist participation database containing over 300 unique addresses with artist studios that have hosted Culture Crawl events over the past 10 years. The survey questionnaire included 64 questions covering a wide range of topics: artistic practice, hours of work, space requirements/preferences, studio location, facilities, rental rates, changes to rental rates over the past 5 years, and lease terms amongst others.

A total of 345 responses were received, out of which 317 participants completed the entire survey. The sensitivity of the information requested, and overall subject matter, made some artists hesitant to provide responses to all questions. Through anecdotal evidence and personal correspondence, several artists expressed their concern or reluctance to divulge information about their studio location and rental rates out of fear that the City of Vancouver might take notice and force them to vacate due to zoning or minor building code violations.

Figure 1 shows that only 6% of artists own their studio space, while 78% rely on a lease or sublet. The category 'other' was filled with responses that primarily indicated a month-to-month or other informal arrangement for use of studio space. The fact that 94% of respondents are renters indicates the acute vulnerability of visual artists to changes in the real-estate market.

Over one-third of artists rely on a gross lease. The 'other' category was primarily filled with responses indicating a month-to-month or verbal commitments with the owner or leaseholder. Many of these agreements include a one-month demolition clause forcing artists to seek alternate arrangements on short notice. Over 47% of respondents do not have a signed lease document protecting their tenancy and outlining the terms of their payment, including rent increases, renewal periods, property maintenance and notice of termination. The landlords and property owners benefit from the lack of written and signed agreements, allowing them to sell, convert or redevelop the building without having to compensate or consider the tenure of artists. Informal arrangements also disadvantage artists because they cannot demand or require landlords to maintain the property and invest in basic amenities, including heating, cooling, lighting and security.



“I’m living in a shed to afford to keep my studio. I have lived in a shed for three years so I can continue to work in art.”

SURVEY RESPONDENT: PAINTER

“Through various evictions, we, as Vancouver artists, must always be on the lookout for another place to go to, should our current space become prohibitively expensive, or alternatively, if the landlord wishes to use the space for other purposes.” DISPLACEMENT ARTIST

FIGURE 2

How much rent/month do you pay per sqft?

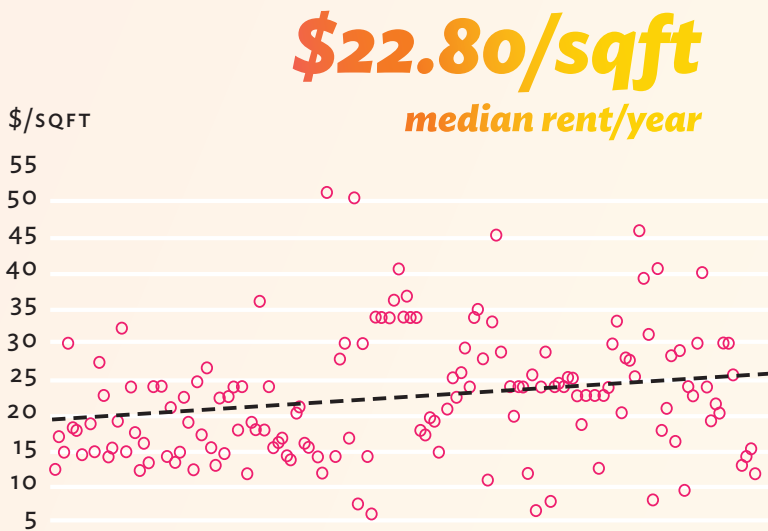
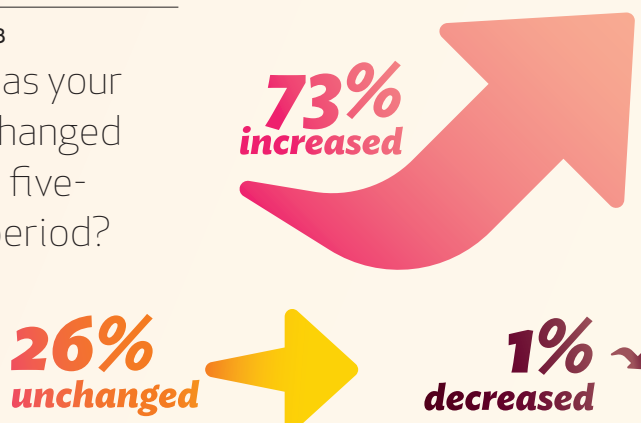


Figure 2 is a plot line graph displaying the distribution of rent/square foot per month paid by artists responding to the survey. The median rent based on the responses is \$1.90 per square foot per month, which amounts to \$22.80 per square foot per year. According to the Colliers Industrial Market Report for Q1 2019, average asking net rent for industrial property in the City of Vancouver is \$17.65 per square foot per year. This latter amount does not factor taxes, insurance, maintenance and other fees charged under triple net lease terms. Adding a market average of 35% for above mentioned costs would make the average asking triple net lease rents increase to \$23.8 per square foot per year. This is marginally higher than the median rent paid by artists and indicates one of the reasons landlords may prefer to replace artists with other enterprises requiring industrial land.

FIGURE 3

How has your rent changed over a five-year period?



According to the 2011 feasibility study produced by McClanaghan & Associates for the ECCS, and based on a total of 107 visual artists reporting, a median rental rate of \$1.15 per square foot/per month was calculated. The 2019 median rental rate of studio space represents a 65% increase over an eight-year period. This rental increase is higher than the rate of growth in the median income of artists.

Figure 3 shows that 73% of artists have faced rent increases over the past five years. The lack of secure tenure means that artists are often faced with annual rent increases due to a variety of factors beyond their control.

In **Figure 4**, the two major reasons for artists relocating studios are unaffordable rent increases and demolition or redevelopment of existing studios. This is of particular concern because these moves are forced as a result of unaffordable spaces and the overall loss of industrial spaces and facilities resulting from increased conversion to residential and commercial uses.

The percentage of respondents currently looking for suitable studio space is 77%, indicating an overwhelming demand for suitable space that is affordable, safe and large enough to meet their needs. However, the current supply of spaces for artists is restricted, leading to higher rents and unsuitable rental terms and working arrangements being accepted by artists with limited options.

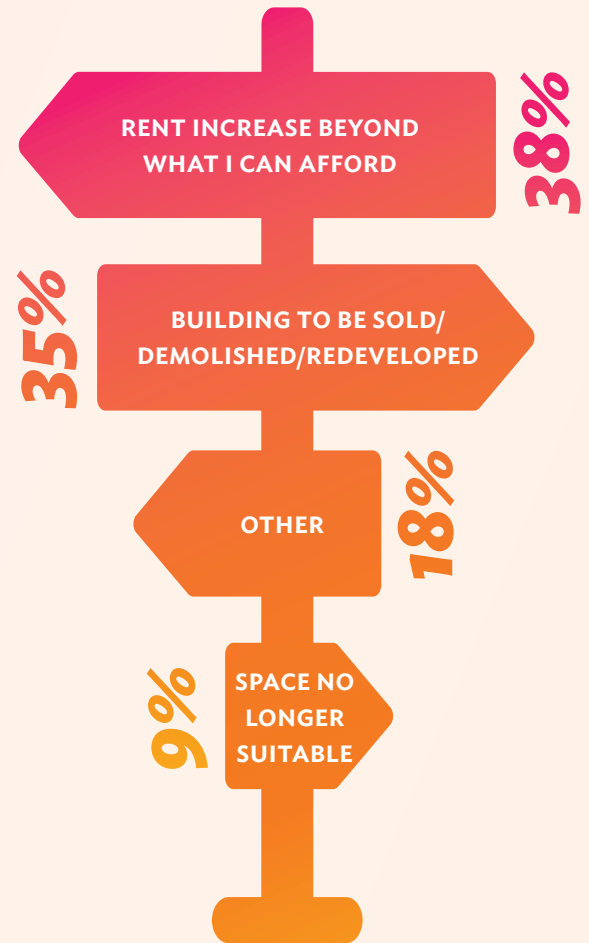
CONSIDER THIS

When asked about future plans if remaining in the current space becomes unviable, responses included abandoning their artistic practice, reducing their studio space and/or working from home, and moving out of Vancouver entirely.

When asked about future plans if remaining in the current space becomes unviable, responses included abandoning their artistic practice, reducing their studio space and/or working from home, and moving out of Vancouver entirely to find an alternate space that is affordable. This confirms the increasing anecdotal reports we hear. These responses raise urgent concerns about the loss of artist talent and creativity in Vancouver as a result of rising unaffordability and availability of studio space. Without access to sufficient studio space, artists will be increasingly forced to abandon their practice or relocate to other cities and regions where they can find suitable art production space. This would result in a loss of creative talent and loss of a strong community that has developed over the past few decades in the Eastside Arts District.

FIGURE 4

Why are you leaving your studio?



Another trend observed from the survey was that a significant number of artists are concentrated in several large buildings including 1000 Parker, Mergatroid, BC Artscape's Sun-Wah Centre, the ARC, William Clark Studios and Portside Studios amongst others. The consolidation of artists in a few, larger and privately-owned facilities is a dangerous trend that would result in significant loss of space, and displacement of a large number of artists, if these individual properties are redeveloped or demolished. Sufficient diversity of location, spaces, facilities and types of properties would provide artists with healthy alternatives for production space and would reduce risks associated with a high concentration of artists in a few properties. For example, the loss of 1000 Parker would be catastrophic to the Eastside Arts District.

the space inventory



The Space Inventory was created using studio location data of 325 addresses with 2,035 participating artists in the Culture Crawl over the past 10 years. A field survey was conducted to verify the status of these properties and whether artists were currently located in these buildings. Extensive outreach through the arts community ensured a high response rate from artists. The main aim of this survey was to document changes in the quantity and location of artist studios.

Artists were asked to respond whether they currently occupied the space, how much space they rented or shared with other artists and whether they were facing threats of eviction. Artists who had already been evicted, or spaces that were redeveloped and no longer used by artists, were also recorded. This information was supplemented by publicly accessible BC Assessment data and used to generate two maps displayed and discussed on the following page.

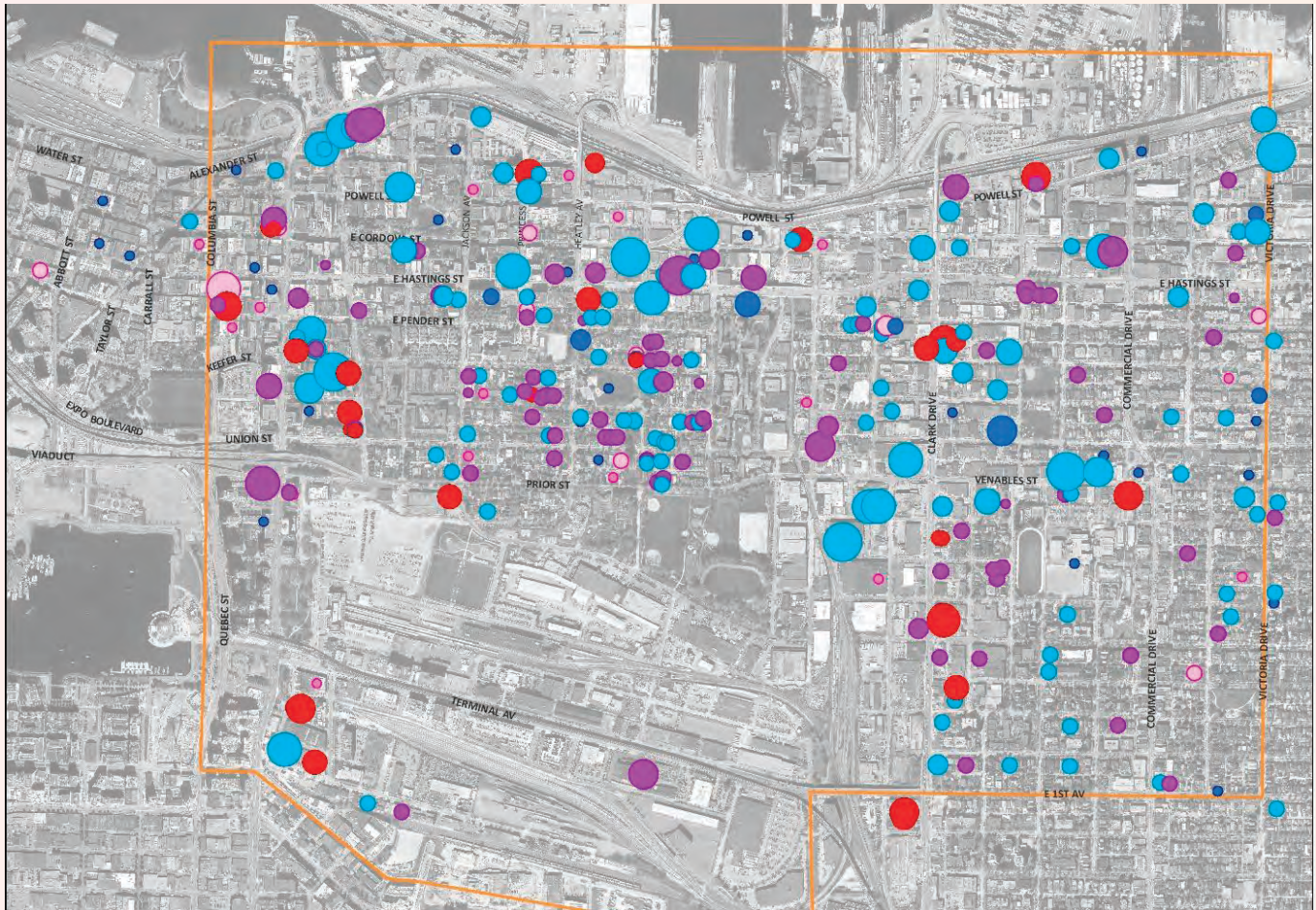
A total of 325 unique addresses were identified as art spaces, out of which 173 are currently used by artists and 152 were lost or converted for other uses. Just under 50% of the spaces used by artists over the past 10 years have been lost or converted. The total area lost or converted is 394,238 ft² with 741,871 ft² still used by artists.

ARTIST & STUDIO STATUS IN NUMBERS

290 UNDER THREAT
423 LOST/NO LONGER EXIST
1,322 CURRENTLY EXIST

 **14%**
FACE
EVICTI
ON
THREAT

 **21%**
HAVE LOST
STUDIOS

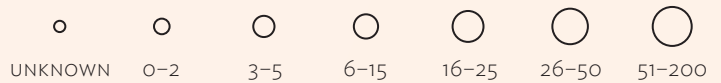


MAP 1 STUDIO LOCATIONS AND STATUS

COLOUR KEY

- EXISTS
- LOST
- UNDER THREAT OF EVICTION
- EXISTS—OTHER FACILITY OR APARTMENT
- NO LONGER EXISTS

CIRCLE SIZE CORRESPONDS TO # OF ARTISTS



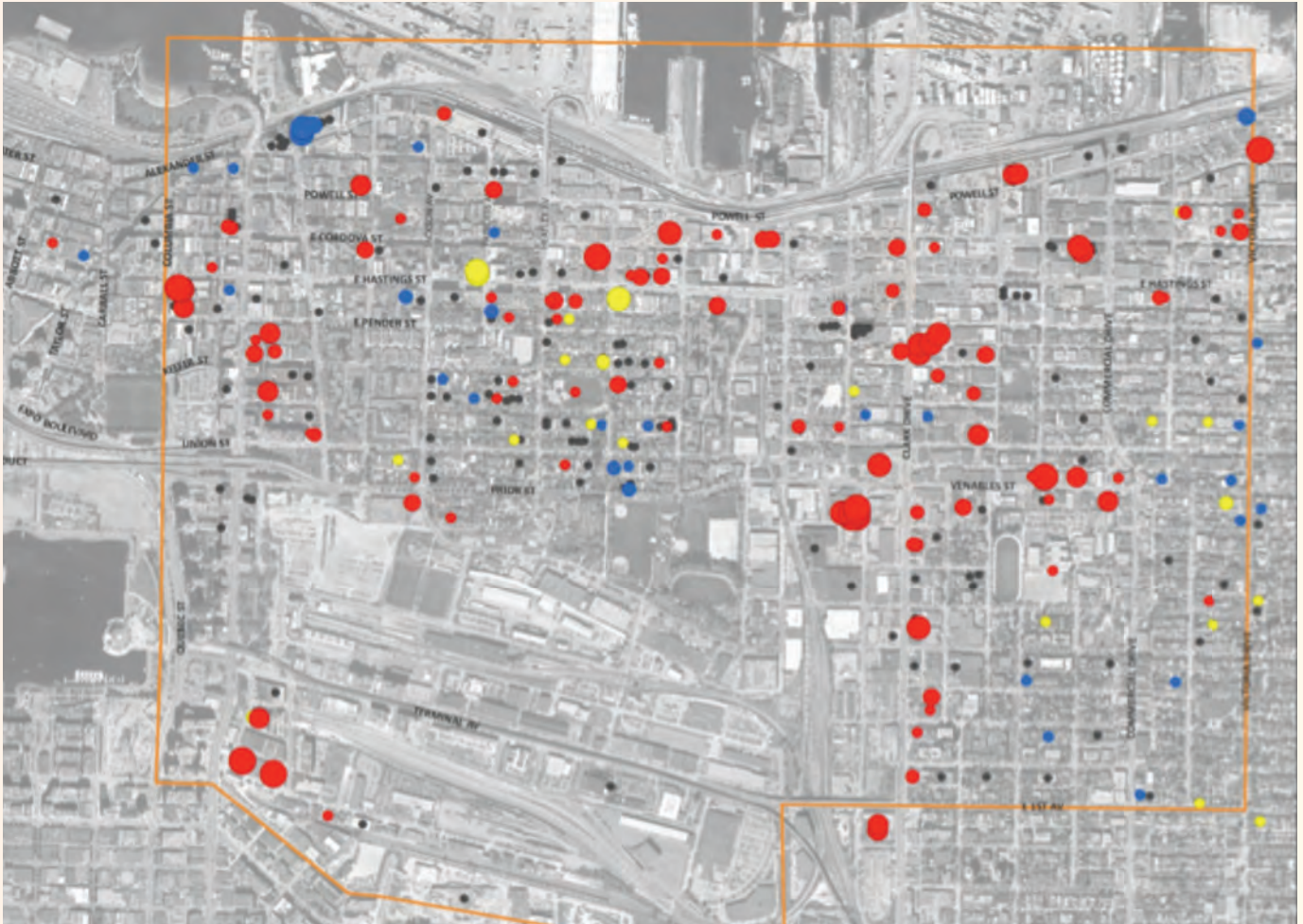
Map 1 shows the locations and number of artists who have lost their studio space, are currently under the threat of eviction based on responses to the survey or did not report facing imminent threat to their tenancy. The size of the circles corresponds to number of artists at each location. A total of 21% of artists have been dislocated and an additional 14% of artists are facing the threat of eviction. Overall one-third of the

artists have either been displaced or are soon to be displaced as a result of redevelopment. Even amongst the spaces that currently exist, 31 have been converted for residential or other use, further reducing the available stock of spaces available for artists. It is important to note that the majority of studios house several artists, so the impact on numbers of artists is even more significant with the loss or threat of each property.

CONSIDER THIS

Out of the 1,612 artists with studios in the area, 1,332 face an imminent threat of displacement based on a high potential for future property redevelopment.

1332 HIGH THREAT
93 MODERATE THREAT
90 LOW THREAT
97 NOT ASSESSED



MAP 2 STUDIO SITES AND LIKELIHOOD OF REDEVELOPMENT

COLOUR KEY

- HIGH
- MODERATE
- LOW
- NOT ASSESSED

CIRCLE SIZE CORRESPONDS TO # OF ARTISTS

- UNKNOWN
- 0-2
- 3-5
- 6-15
- 16-25
- 26-50
- 51-200

Map 2 was created using a relative scale of assessment to evaluate the likelihood of future potential for redevelopment of properties where 1,612 artists whose spaces current exist and in spaces where artists are facing the threat of eviction. This methodology used publicly accessible information from BC Assessment, including property (land and building tax values), FSR, site coverage and building age. A building quality index

was created using this data, assigning high, moderate and low potential for property redevelopment. The criteria for high redevelopment potential was assigned to properties with either very low building value compared to the total property assessment value ($\leq 5\%$) or for buildings that have very low FSR (indicating that the land is being underutilized, $\leq 5\%$). Moderate redevelopment potential was assigned for parcels with low building value

to assessed value or FSR utilization (between 5 and 10%). Low potential for redevelopment was assigned to buildings built before 1950 (susceptible to redevelopment due to age) and those that did not fall into one of the other two categories. There were 97 artists whose spaces are either recently constructed or have high FSR utilization rates and/or lower differences between land and building values which indicate that they are unlikely to be redeveloped because they are well utilized or yielding higher returns on investment.

Map 2 emphasizes that out of the 1,612 artists that currently have studios in the area, 1,332 should be considered as facing imminent threat of displacement based on a high potential for future property redevelopment. There are only 97 artists who occupy spaces classified with a

low threat for potential future redevelopment. The prevalent market-driven economic rationale of 'highest and best use' could result in redevelopment of a majority of properties used by artists as studios or production spaces. Owners of buildings in rezoned areas, especially industrial properties, seeking to generate additional revenue and a higher rate of return will inevitably seek to increase the rate of return from their property. This would result in either adding additional floor area through upgrades or redevelopment to maximize FSR and zoning policies that would result in higher rents from new tenants. This type of economic development strategy is supported by municipal planning through zoning and regulatory policy changes that adversely affect artists currently occupying older and "underutilized" buildings.

“After five studio displacements over the years due to development in the City, I call 1000 Parker my home but for how much longer remains to be seen. Such is the life of a Vancouver artist, I’m afraid.”

DISPLACEMENT ARTIST

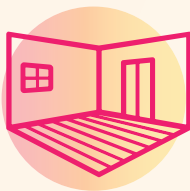
quality studio space

What constitutes good or ideal studio space will vary considerably amongst artists, but the recent survey of artists demonstrated a number of key elements that are widely sought: affordability, size, safety, light, secure tenure, predictable rent and community.



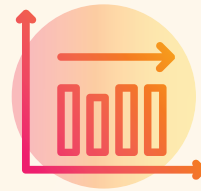
Affordability is one of the biggest factors for artists, who are typically in the lower income brackets in our communities. Newer spaces that might have

been considered as suitable for visual art production are often priced beyond the means of working artists. 'Creative Enterprise' designations, while ostensibly providing space for artist studios, are often prohibitively expensive in comparison to older industrial buildings. If the space is not planned to be affordable for artists, that space will likely be leased to software, video game, film production and special effects or graphic design firms.



Size and **safety** are also common concerns. With increasing rents, artists are being forced into smaller spaces which greatly

impacts the kind of work they can undertake. In addition to the space needed to produce their work, artists need space for storing materials and finished artwork. While many artists are sharing studios or spaces within studios as a means to cover rising rents, this strategy further reduces the amount of space available per artist. Working in older buildings, marginal neighbourhoods, or, as many artists do, working on their own adds concerns about security and safety. **Light** is also key for visual artists, as they work with colour, tone, and form.



Secure tenure and **predictable rent** are critical to the success of the small businesses led by artists. Moving every year, having to move abruptly

when massive rent increases are communicated, or being evicted to make way for new development all disrupt the artists' businesses and connections to their community that often are key factors in success. Connections with other artists and supporting businesses generate opportunities, learning, a sense of belonging and a supportive **artistic community**.



While some artists may be able to work successfully in a room in their residence, a substantial portion of working artists require light to full **industrial** elements

to support their practice. This might mean venting for strongly scented and toxic spray paint, space for woodworking, a wet room for dyeing, high voltage electrical outlets to support kilns, high ceilings/doors/freight elevators, or other specific needs that are rarely provided for in residential spaces. The need is for production space, and not 'loft lifestyle' residential spaces.

strategies



Protect Existing Spaces: NO NET LOSS

Protecting the existing stock of artist production space should be an urgent priority for the City of Vancouver in order to prevent further displacement of artists from Vancouver. The City of Vancouver should stop rezoning industrial land for housing, office, and mixed-use developments to discourage speculative developers and investors from acquiring and holding low density industrial lands while pursuing rezoning applications. Vancouver has lost over 565 ha of industrial land over the past 30 years and this has resulted in increased competition and rising rents.

The City-wide community plan which will be prepared over the next three years presents an opportunity for updating existing local area

plans, such as the DTES, False Creek Flats, Mount Pleasant Industrial and Grandview Woodlands, to include specific targets and funding measures for protecting existing artist production spaces. Artist spaces should be recognized as an important part of Public Benefit Strategies within existing area plans. Rezoning and development permit applications for properties with existing artist spaces should be assessed based on their impact on local artists living and working in the neighbourhood.

In the DTES and False Creek Flats area plans, an artist production space policy similar to the Single Room Occupancy (SRO) replacement bylaw should be implemented to ensure existing spaces are replaced by future redevelopment. Mandating 1:1 replacement ratio of artist production spaces on a per square foot basis in new developments

would ensure a no-net-loss policy that effectively upgrades the quality of spaces in new developments. This initiative would ensure that developers integrate well-suited artist production spaces in new mixed-use projects. Establishing neighbourhood targets for artist production and cultural spaces would ensure a diversity of spaces spread across multiple buildings.

Housing has been the primary focus for rezoning and redevelopment in many of these areas. However, it is critical that the City of Vancouver also prioritize arts and culture in order to maintain the neighbourhood character which is strongly influenced by artists. This policy goal can be established through official designation of an arts district, the Eastside Arts District, centred around the high density of artist studios and production spaces that participate in the annual Eastside Culture Crawl. Official designation should be supported by policy and funding measures, some of which are discussed below, to establish the visibility of artists and their contributions in these communities.

In the False Creek Flats plan area, density restrictions for the ground floor of buildings are designed to encourage activation and engagement through light industrial use which includes artist studios. The City of Vancouver should strengthen this policy by establishing a target for artist production space based on existing space currently used by artists in the area. Mandating and/or incentivizing the inclusion of artist production space such as through density bonusing is a priority in this area. Planning policies are only useful if implementation strategies are incorporated in the approval process.

Throughout the City of Vancouver, including Chinatown, Heritage Designation strategies are being explored and implemented to protect LEGACY businesses that not only have been recognized as providing valuable service to the

CONSIDER THIS

Artist spaces should be recognized as an important part of Public Benefit Strategies within existing area plans. Rezoning and development permit applications for properties with existing artist spaces should be assessed based on their impact on local artists living and working in the neighbourhood.

community, but to the culture of place. These businesses are considered “intangible heritage”, an important element of the neighbourhood fabric that belongs more to the culture of place than to the physical characteristics of a building. Similarly, artist studios and production spaces that serve as the social, creative and intellectual lifeblood of the community should be recognized as intangible heritage assets that strengthen the neighbourhood identity and are therefore worth protecting through heritage designation bylaws. Heritage density bonusing should be extended to artist production and cultural spaces that have played a significant role in preserving, celebrating and increasing the visibility of cultural legacy within neighbourhoods.



Rental Stock Protection

Ensuring affordability of new production spaces for artists requires additional policies, such as restrictive covenants limiting the amount of rent that developers or owners of these new spaces can charge. This type of policy would be similar to restrictive covenants currently used under the Rental 100 program and, the Moderate Income Rental Housing Pilot Program. These programs offer incentives including additional height and density, waived Development Cost Levies (DCL), reduced parking requirements and expedited permit processing. Policy measures supported with financial incentives for private entities would encourage investment in the arts and cultural community. These measures are an important aspect to ensure the economic viability of projects while providing artists with affordable options for studio space.



Managing Property Taxes

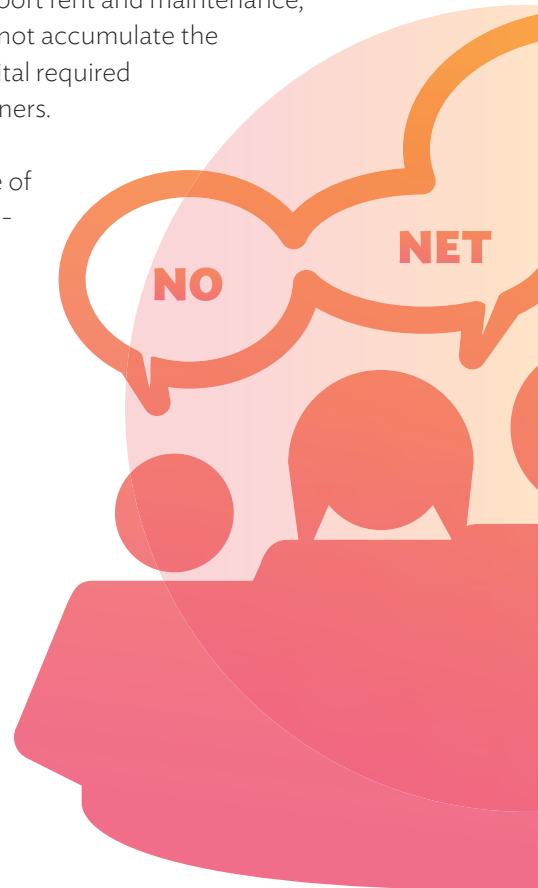
Rapidly rising property values have led to significant annual increases in rent under the prevalent triple net lease terms for commercial spaces. Artists and non-profit groups are saddled with these escalating taxes under such lease terms. While the tax assessment falls under the provincial government’s jurisdiction, the City of Vancouver should continue to push for a split-tax assessment classification. This would allow the City of Vancouver to create split assessments for commercial and industrial properties under which artist production spaces could be taxed at a lower level in comparison to other businesses. Additionally, the City of Vancouver should pilot a strategy to encourage increasing the supply of artist spaces by providing tax break incentives for property owners providing space to artists on fixed term leases in industrial lands. This type of policy would be similar to the treatment of vacant lots that are turned over for community gardens until the time of redevelopment. Policies

are in place allowing landowners to pay a highly reduced annual property tax in exchange for allowing the community access to the space for use as a temporary community garden until development permits are processed. While this type of policy solution would not provide long-term benefits, it would encourage developers to legally allow artists to occupy existing buildings slated for redevelopment. The rezoning process can take upwards of 18 months and during this time many properties remain vacant or are demolished. Incentivizing short-term arrangements for artists in these types of properties would temporarily increase the supply of artist production space while regularizing the presence of artists in underutilized buildings.



Encouraging Non-Profit and Community Ownership—Increasing Artist Spaces

There are currently no large-scale artist production spaces owned and operated by non-profit organizations. While artists can support rent and maintenance, etc., many cannot accumulate the significant capital required to become owners. Increasing the ownership rate of artists and non-



profit groups would protect production space from the negative effects of rising rents and real estate speculation. Ownership would provide long-term financial stability, allowing artists to invest in facility upgrades and maintenance, and would increase public access to spaces. Supporting non-profit operators to acquire and operate artist spaces would ensure stable rental rates for artists while also expanding organizational capacity to develop new facilities. Leveraging the property asset, these groups would qualify for institutional loans to fund redevelopment, acquisition of additional space and to provide deeper subsidies for marginalized and underrepresented artists.

This approach was used in 2014 by directing \$4.5 million of CAC funding from the Rize development in Mount Pleasant to four non-profit arts organizations in the neighbourhood.

The Western Front, an artist-run centre, was able to purchase the property where it has been located for the past 20 years. The Grunt Gallery, another artist-run centre, received funding to pay off its mortgage and VIVO received funds to develop a space. The Arts Factory was the only cultural facility to receive funding to complete infrastructure upgrades to

increase production space for artists. The City of Vancouver needs to prioritize protecting artist production spaces, instead of only focusing on exhibition, performance and gallery spaces as those cultural categories have already received significant funding and policy attention over the past decade.

Recognizing the importance of arts and cultural spaces as part of Public Benefits Strategies in neighbourhood plans would allow for such types of negotiations in future rezoning and developments in the DTES and False Creek Flats. The current CAC policy does not allow for city-wide transfer of funding, thereby restricting the amount of funding available in certain neighbourhoods, including the DTES. Allowing CAC transfers to other neighbourhoods would increase the amount of funding available for artist production spaces in the DTES without reducing the level of contributions to social housing.



Recognizing an Arts District—Leveraging City of Vancouver-owned assets

As noted earlier, the Eastside

Arts District has a high concentration of art production space: Art Happens Here. In addition, the City of Vancouver, as one of the largest landowners, has significant property in the False Creek Flats within the Innovation Hub and Creative Campus sub-area. Cultural industries already comprise one in five businesses within the False Creek Flats. Supporting a concentrated area for artists would create a stable creative ecosystem, encouraging other arts based businesses to relocate in surrounding areas. The official recognition of the Eastside Arts District along with policies and dedicated funding would serve as a catalyst for building community identity, tourism and economic growth.



City of Vancouver owned land and facilities should be protected as the nucleus for the Eastside Arts District, providing secure tenure and affordable rental spaces for artist studios. This funding mechanism has been successfully implemented for social housing projects on seven city-owned sites that have been made available to the Community Land Trust, a non-profit property development and management organization on long-term leases. Providing the land for an arts hub would enable non-profit groups to fundraise for facilities development and operations from the provincial and federal governments as well as private donors. The City of Vancouver can also contribute financial resources to acquire new sites through the Property Endowment Fund. Long-term loans secured against assets in the Property Endowment Fund and backed by the municipal government can provide non-profit organizations with the means to secure favourable mortgages to acquire and develop

new artist production spaces. Artists renting studio spaces would contribute towards paying down the mortgage thus contributing to community ownership of assets that would otherwise be subject to market speculation.

Granville Island is a good example of the positive impact of artists and cultural producers in transforming former industrial lands into a thriving ecosystem for artistic producers as well as a tourist destination. Long-term leases and affordable rental rates have supported a diverse and thriving community of artists who contribute to the economic vitality of this unique tourist destination. The older industrial facilities have been repurposed and retrofitted to suit a variety of artistic practices including ceramics, theatre, dance, music, sculpture, printmaking and painting. Granville Island hosts three print studios making it the highest density of such facilities and expertise amongst Canadian cities.

“Before our old studio was turned into yet another condominium building, [its] affordability not only allowed us to support our art practice, but also to engage the community at large, including LGBTQ and marginalized artists, and former residents of the Downtown Eastside. [Now] we get by working disjointedly in co-working spaces, expensive recording studios and in our own homes—[but] we have lost our community.”

DISPLACEMENT ARTIST

conclusion

This report provides the first detailed analysis of the challenges, threats and opportunities for preserving and enhancing visual artist production spaces in the Eastside Arts District. While no single policy or funding tool will secure the current and future needs of artists, this report identifies the problems and a range of measures which can be leveraged to grow the unique cultural assets and creative talent in the City of Vancouver.

The City of Vancouver has taken a leadership role in promoting sustainable development with strong regulatory policies and funding for environmental initiatives and infrastructure for public transportation. Housing affordability has recently taken precedence with a range of new policies, incentives and funding mechanisms. However, the loss of artist production space has not received significant government attention.

The City of Vancouver's cultural programs have focused on funding and promoting large venues such as museums, galleries and performance spaces where the work of artists is exhibited or consumed by the public. This economic development rationale supports tourism and urban regeneration but has not improved the working conditions or livelihoods of the majority of artists.

The high density of artists in the Eastside Arts District has contributed to local economic and social regeneration, playing an important role in making Vancouver a livable, vibrant and diverse city. The forced displacement of artists from



ARTWORK: DAVID ROBINSON

“My Main Street Studio is now a restaurant—sometimes I eat there and I try to sit in the area where I once put my easel because part of me still feels connected through the creative energy I invested there. After a temporary studio, I was lucky to be able to relocate within the Parker Street Studios. I am a survivor of several displacements.” SHERRY COOPER



this district to other parts of the province, country and internationally will lead to a loss of creativity: transforming local spaces into homogenous ‘non-spaces’ that are ubiquitous and indistinguishable. The City of Vancouver needs to implement policies and dedicate funding to grow the Eastside Arts District.

A NO-NET LOSS, PLUS! strategy is urgently required to stop the loss of artist spaces that are under threat of redevelopment and rising rents. Policies incentivizing the expansion of artist production spaces would encourage private developers to build more facilities for artists in new developments. Without these policies, developers will build commercial and office spaces for high technology and creative manufacturing industries that pay higher rents than artists.

Additional density, expedited permit reviews and reduced development permit fees are some of the policy measures that would incentivize and increase private sector contributions towards the protection and increase in supply of artist production spaces within new developments.

Dedicating a portion of city-wide CAC contributions to fund the purchase and development of an arts facility would provide the necessary momentum for other levels of government and the private sector to fund artist production spaces.

Building local capacity through innovative ownership and development models would create an independent and diverse community of artists. Supporting local artists provides broader economic benefits in an increasingly homogenized urban landscape. Supporting non-profit and social purpose organizations with technical assistance, grants, access to city-owned property and long-term mortgages guaranteed by the City of Vancouver are solutions that would protect affordable artist production spaces.



a city without art

**NO NET LOSS,
PLUS!**

A REPORT BY THE
EASTSIDE
**CULTURE
CRAWL
SOCIETY**

OCTOBER 2019

