

## COMMUNITY RESPONSES TO FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

August 6 - 9, 2018

**Question #1: In the recent community survey, the Working Team asked participants about their vision for an arts park. Many respondents checked off both temporary seating (blankets, rental lawn chairs, etc.) and permanent seating (seats fixed into the ground). Would you share your thoughts on which type of seating would most enhance both the park setting and performance/exhibition space?**

The seating should not be fixed, because it is a multi-use space. Tanglewood doesn't have fixed seating on their lawn; everyone brings their own blankets and chairs. I like the idea of flexible seating.

Permanent seating is not necessary. It is better to preserve the greenery

I wouldn't want to crowd the space with chairs

We should probably have some seating for the elderly, but not permanent chairs.

Bring in chairs when you need them

We need temporary seating. Not everyone will bring their own chairs.

Renting chairs on-site will be necessary and provide jobs for young kids

If the stage is designed with pavement in front of it, then have permanent chairs in that spot. Put the temporary seating behind the permanent chairs.

Renting lawn chairs is good

You might find that the permanent chairs get vandalized

Make sure there are benches along the perimeter

Make pathways for wheelchairs

There should be some grassy areas

I have seen these inflatable chairs that can seat two sitting and one reclining. They are also re-inflatable after use; but probably too much for an elderly person to inflate. They would be fun for younger people.

**IDEAS:**

**Use inflatable/reusable chairs as part of rental**

**Don't put up permanent chairs that could be vandalized**

**Make sure there are adequate pathways for wheelchairs**

**Question #2: The community survey results clearly indicated that the venue should focus on "local artists and local audiences". What does the word "local" mean to you, and would you want any touring artists from outside the local area to perform on the stage?**

Local means "in the neighborhood, adjacent to Roxbury" so that local artists get to show their work

Definitely, within Boston

There is a place for touring artists in the venue.

Get a community advisory committee to help in decision-making on programming

Behavior is motivated by perception, for example people of color don't always feel downtown venues are welcoming

Touring companies often have resources and they expand our arts experiences

Roxbury and Dorchester are culturally important, plus maybe Mattapan

Local arts groups would find a welcome audience in this venue

I think you should add Jamaica Plain and Roslindale

As far as touring groups, only if they are culturally significant

Local to me means Boston. Roxbury is too limiting for artists to get their name out

There is a benefit to having visiting artists and audiences

There should be a process for screening artists

Local is a must

When you start bringing in outsiders, you diminish the local artists

I think of New England as local

I think you have to focus on Boston

Prioritize local artists, and bring in fewer artists from outside

There are numerous venues throughout Boston, we should keep this one for our local artists and audiences

If you have to bring in outside artists, then they should perform for free

Lots of town venues give preference to their local artists

We have arts academies in Boston and we should feature this young, emerging talent

Local is Roxbury and surrounding neighborhoods

Let emerging artists get exposure; however there is a value to having touring performances. I think the balance should be 80% local and 20% outside touring artists

The idea is not to exclude outside audiences and artists, but to highlight our own cultures

**IDEAS:**

**Split the local vs. touring: 80% local, 20% touring**

**If you bring in outside artists, they should perform for free**

**We are not excluding outsiders; we are highlighting our own**

**Question #3: Many of the survey participants indicated that they would prefer to see "art shows" in the venue. for you, what would be included in a successful "art show"?**

I would like to see curated shows with a diversity of artists and art forms.

Shows should appeal to a broad audience

Feature emerging artists, but present their work in a way that says "quality"

Art show openings should make all comers feel welcome

It doesn't matter if you have any credentials, it only matters that you appreciate the art

Art shows should have some hands-on engagement with both the artist(s) and the art form being highlighted

Shows should appeal to families and adults

The Mills Gallery (South End) has the artists offer workshops

Showcase local artists

Displays of painting, sculpture, pop up market, crafts, people making jewelry, soaps, etc.

Visual art, face painting, jewelry, displays for sale

Purpose of the show is to display art

There should be a variety of art forms

Interactive with the artists and the art

Food...always important

In addition to painting, exhibitions, paint nights, you should include interpretive dance, spoken word, rap

Art shows should be very broad

There are lots of African musicians and drummers in the area and they have no place to perform

Festivals are very popular now

Will youth have any say in leadership?

Who will run it?

Make the shows totally inclusive

Always have some kind of interactive activities

Have information about the artists

Be able to watch the artists work

Be able to engage the artists in conversations about the work

Have snacks and drinks

Have performance art on the stage during the show

Music should be included in an art show, it makes it more engaging for the audiences

**IDEAS:**

**Make sure there is space for artists to interact with audiences**

**Include other art forms on the stage**

**Allow audiences to have hands-on experiences with the art being presented**

**Provide audiences with information about the artists and the work they will see at the show**

**Include the youth in the leadership and decision-making about events**

**Present the art shows in a professional way, and have some of the shows curated**

**Question #4: Given that people indicated that they want local artists featured, what kinds of performances and visual arts presentations would be of interest to you and the community?**

Anything that is live and is "danceable"

Include dancing like salsa, funk, reggae, tango, polka

Jazz, theater

Shakespeare in the Common would work well in this intimate space. At the Common, we were too far away to really appreciate the performance

Include youth-oriented and intergenerational arts performances

Feature emerging artists

There should be a balance between introducing audiences to artists and then pushing audiences to be challenged by the art

Share the unexpected

Feature spoken word

Live music performances

Have an "American Idol" type competition for local artists

Folk and world music would draw an audience

Feature culturally representative dance

Plays and musicals like you see at the Wang

A mixture of music, dance and theater

Jazz, hip hop, liturgical pieces and interactive art

Present every type of art, leave nothing out

Encourage access, so that people can show their work

Be open to everything

I am more inclined to attend music and visual art shows, as well as workshops on producing your own art

**IDEAS:**

**Run workshops that help emerging artists to best show their work**

**Run workshops that encourage artists to produce their own shows**

**Host competitions that feature local talent**

**Be open to all kinds of art**

**Include youth-oriented art forms**

**Question #5: How would you or your organization utilize the venue? For example, would you be interested in performing on the stage? Renting the stage? Sponsoring an event on the stage? Hosting a festival? Running classes?**

I would be interested in steering some small events that need a larger venue to perform on the Oasis stage

I would help connect artists to the venue

I think we should partner with the Cooper Center

I would support an Arts Market monthly

I would rent it out for my organization

I would encourage local dance groups to perform on the stage

I would volunteer and be part of the audience

I always check to see what the City of Boston is offering and either take my children or they go on their own. My kids could volunteer and I would be an audience member

I would take advantage of many of the options (multiple)

Don't say "no" to anybody interested

Everything is negotiable

I am interested in hosting events, because I am also a DJ and event host.

I would attend performances

I would lead workshops

**IDEAS:**

**Publicize the opportunities available for artists, producers, and event hosts**

**Host workshops to help people to become producers and hosts of events**

**Have clearly stated policies for all categories of venue use**

**Create "technical spec sheets" that allow artists, performers and producers to understand the full capabilities of the venue and the stage**

**Question #6: When artists and audiences come together, there is an economic impact on the neighborhood. Some businesses see an increase in customers, others become vendors, providing goods and services to the venue. How do you see this venue impacting the economy of Roxbury?**

New people will get to know the businesses and vendors

More people will be drawn to the area and will shop and buy things

I hope the venue will use local vendors for food...Haley House, Dudley Cafe

Both brick and mortar retailers and those who cater from home should be invited to provide goods

Pay the artists to bring their art to the public, a living wage and commissions

An influx of people should make a positive impact on all businesses

Food trucks and pop up markets will benefit

It is natural to go to a restaurant before or after a performance or event

My hope is that people who own businesses will want to partner with the venue, so that we don't have to bring in outside vendors

Having the Oasis @ Bartlett active will increase visibility and availability of a variety of goods and it will encourage local businesses to professionalize their efforts

They can use the community to build capacity for their businesses

Shows bring in different audiences, and they may be looking for different goods and services

There are already a lot of cool businesses in Roxbury and it would help to give them more visibility

I think the activity in the park will open up the reach of the community to outsiders

**IDEAS:**

**Encourage partnerships between local businesses and Oasis @ Bartlett**

**Encourage those who do not have a "storefront" operation to consider providing goods and services**

**Provide some support to local emerging businesses to help them professionalize their marketing and presentation**

**Provide advertising options in the park for local businesses**

**Encourage local businesses to sponsor events to get more visibility**

**Question #7: What amenities would draw you to the venue, in addition to the park and its art and cultural activities? For instance, refreshment stand, food trucks, ice cream, alcoholic beverages, coffee bar, device charging stations?**

Drinking Fountain

Shade, both manmade and natural

Maintained grounds (multiple)

Safe space

Clean

A place with a cafe, bar and food (multiple)

I think alcohol should be limited to special events for adults and openings

Bike racks, pathways for wheelchairs (multiple)

Ice cream (multiple)

Charging devices built into the benches

Rest rooms that are clean

Food trucks (multiple)

We're in a food truck craze, very attractive

Permanent vendors in the park should include murals, historical facts, skating in the winter

Trees, grass and plantings so you can hang out with nature (multiple)

A water feature would be great (multiple)

Ice cream is the best, perhaps an ice cream truck that comes through for families (multiple)

Make the space interchangeable for different events (multiple)

Coffee bar, Alcohol is dependent on event, like Lawn on D

Beer truck for the right events

Alcohol changes the environment, but it is a revenue driver

Partner with a restaurant that has a liquor license

Chairs available for rental

Refreshment stand with fresh lemonade

A Cafe, food trucks, charging stations and bike racks

Shade trees (multiple)

Exercise equipment that is stationary (park on Humboldt has it)

Rest rooms must be clean (multiple)

Alcohol might cause issues with crowd control

Wi-Fi (multiple)

Ability to bring your dog to a concert or to hang out with you

Healthy vegetarian options (multiple)

**IDEAS:**

**Pet friendly for relaxation or at an event**

**Wi-Fi availability**

**A water feature as a centerpiece**

**Exercise equipment**

**Build the charging stations into the benches and chairs**

**Feature some historical facts in the park**

**Drinking Fountains**

**Question #8: Clearly, there will be operating costs to run the venue, book the talent, promote the events, and pay for performers and artists. How do you anticipate these costs will be covered? What are appropriate ticket prices?**

A venue like this is costly. Ticket revenue will not cover the costs

Keep ticket prices affordable

The neighborhood is now economically diverse, so have a sliding scale

Provide a certain number of subsidized tickets, possibly passes at the libraries

\$10-15 to no more than \$25-30, depending on the event

Hold "special performances" as fundraisers with much higher ticket prices

Have some events as "Pay what you can"

Get grants, partnerships and public funding

Tickets should be low cost to no cost

Seek sponsorships from Boston-based businesses

Residents should get a discount and priority seating

\$10 for adult tickets and \$5 for children and seniors

Set a higher price for owners of new housing

Get revenue from grants, concession sales, T-Shirts, mugs, commissions on artist sales, arts market events,

Absolutely charge for tickets 410 for children to \$20 for adults

Sponsors for people who cannot afford to pay for tickets

Take advantage of free tickets through the library system

\$10 for tickets would be affordable, depending on the event

Kids 8 and under should get free tickets

Theater \$10 and vouchers for those who cannot afford

Why don't you create an annual membership program...which gives you access to all free and ticketed events. Since people will pick and choose their events, the park won't get overcrowded. Save some tickets for those without memberships

Have discounts for children and seniors

Make sure that there are free events, as well as ticketed

I think you should use a sliding scale, giving people options, so they can participate

Museums have sliding scales

Follow the library's use of free passes

Sell goods to help raise revenue, place vending machines in the park to create revenue.

Sell annual memberships

Solicit sponsorships from local business community

Invite institutions and organizations to come at a group rate, especially for families to attend

**IDEAS:**

**Sell annual memberships, perhaps on a sliding scale. Since not every member will attend every event, you can still sell individual tickets.**

**Sell tickets based on a sliding scale**

**Solicit sponsorships from local venues, especially target those that benefit the most from the venue**

**Mix free events in with those that require a ticket**

**\$10 seems to be the most feasible for adult tickets**

**Provide seniors and children with discounts**

**Question #9: In this age of technology and many choices for getting information, how would you suggest the programs and events at Oasis @ Bartlett be promoted?**

Low tech...flyers in every business and organization

Connect with all of the youth organizations and flyer their meeting places

Use the media outlets including Cable TV - BNN

Develop a community base of interested residents and businesses

Develop relationships with all of the housing complexes and agencies

Partner with Neighborhood Associations and Main Street Organizations to be able to access their members, include DSNI in this group

Social media is the cheapest way

Target community gatherings

Use Eventbrite and Meetup

Place flyers in apartment buildings

Use Email

Send out newsletters

Use Sandwich Boards, everyone reads them

Use Nuestra's newsletter to promote the park

People still listen to radio. I listen to NPE

You have to target the radio station to the particular event

Flyer Dudley Station

Get time on local news shows

Local newspapers, Metro, Banner

Facebook, Instagram

Kiosk in the Park

Use the bulletins from local churches and newsletters

Flyers are a waste

Post notices, and then follow up with the people who run events at organizations

Involve law enforcement in the presentation of events and as security at large gatherings

It is good to have a feeling of safety at large gatherings

We want people to feel safe, but not targeted by police

Put up ads on local busses

You have to go through channels to get ads on busses

Get into the City's annual Summer Program Book and on the City's website for events

Start a grassroots campaign to promote the opening of the venue

Make the website active and up to date, and build awareness of the website

Use Twitter

Host a Design Competition

Create a digital story telling of the history of Roxbury

Include local testimonials in advertising

Engage with Teen Empowerment to market the venue

Create a Pond in the Park for summer and winter activities

Send out post cards for specific events

Radio 96.9

DEMO is a new online radio station that is getting lots of fans

**IDEAS:**

**Check out new online radio station DEMO**

**Develop a database of individuals and groups with likes and preferences and then send post cards to target audiences**

**Engage with organizations like Teen Empowerment to help get the youth involved and to promote the venue**

**Make the website a "go to" source for event information**

**Plan ahead and get into the City's Summer Program Book and on the City's event calendar**

**Host a design competition for best marketing ideas**

**Create a digital history of Roxbury and feature it in the park**

**Include local testimonials in marketing**

**Include event information in local church bulletins and organizations' newsletters**

**Place advertisements on local busses**

## KEY ISSUES

- 1) In order to maximize attendance at each of the 13 focus groups scheduled for community residents, organizations, businesses and civic groups, invitees were encouraged to attend any of the focus groups that fit into their schedules on August 6th and 7th, 2018. The schedule included morning, afternoon and evening slots on both days. Although an effort was made through the media and written invitations, only 16 signed up to participate, of whom 12 showed up. Of the twelve participants, there was one focus group of 7, one of 2 participants, and three individual conversations.
- 2) No youth participated in the community interviews, although there were several young adults
- 3) The weather on August 6th and 7th may have kept people from coming on the spur of the moment, as the temperature reached into the mid and upper 90s, with very high humidity.

## KEY FINDINGS

### Question #1:

The community response, although small in numbers, generally agreed that temporary seating would be the most preferred, as the audiences want to see the space used in many different ways.

Most agreed that having access to lawn chair rentals was convenient, and if priced affordably (\$.50-\$1 per chair), this concession would be helpful and profitable.

Even those who preferred some fixed seating for performances agreed that these could be chairs set up around the stage on a per event basis.

### Question #2:

The community was unanimous that the focus of Oasis @ Bartlett should be local professional and local emerging artists. Likewise, the preference was for audiences also to be local. While some wanted the focus to be on Roxbury and surrounding neighborhoods, many felt that Boston should be the target for both artists and audiences, with preference given to Roxbury residents.

As for touring artists, the majority responded that the venue should allow touring groups to perform on the stage, but these groups should have financial sponsorship and should represent art forms and credentials that aren't readily available within the community,

The community participants also felt strongly that the food vendors and other service providers for Oasis @ Bartlett should likewise be from the community. There was a recommendation that no "national or regional" chains supply concessions in the venue.

### Question #3:

The community participants also described "art shows" as "art festivals", inclusive of live performances on the stage, interactions with the visual artists, opportunities for audience participation, food and drink, and the option to purchase arts and crafts that are on exhibit.

Some of the participants asked that the shows be as professional as possible and have the more established artists participated in adjudicated shows, with bios available on participating artists.

There were also suggestions that workshops be provided to artists, so that their work is well-presented.

The community group also wanted to insure that all audiences feel welcomed in the venue, and that some shows should challenge the audiences with new concepts and material.

The community wants opportunities to talk to artists, watch them in the creative process, and also participate interactively with artists.

**Question #4:**

The community respondents want any and every art form to be welcome to grace the park or the stage.

The community wants some say in what is booked at the park through some kind of youth-oriented advisory group and an adult community advisory group.

Many commented on the murals that have been created and their desire to see rotating exhibits and art installations.

**Question #5:**

Although most of the community interviewees want to come and enjoy the park as visitors and audience members, a number of them also produce events, host/DJ events, and have skills that can be shared in workshops. Some would also like to take classes from visiting artists.

There was a positive response to seeking resident "companies" to call Oasis @ Bartlett their summer home (dance companies, theater companies, jazz groups).

**Question #6:**

The community wants to support the businesses and vendors who are in Roxbury. They were not in favor of using national or regional franchises to provide the food and drink in the venue. They want to reach out to the small and "at home" businesses like caterers and jewelry makers to become vendors who service the park.

The community participants also favor partnering with local restaurants and cafes to bring in food and beverages, when performances and art shows are scheduled.

The community feels that Roxbury is growing its diversity of businesses and services and that expanding their customer base will be the result of new audiences visiting Oasis @ Bartlett.

The community respondents also agreed that local businesses will be prospective sponsors for a variety of activities scheduled at Oasis @ Bartlett.

**Question #7:**

The community group also recommended a variety of vendors in the park, but offered that they would prefer a space set aside for vendors to use during performances and events. They all like food trucks, but aren't sure where they fit into the space at the park. Maybe on the street.

This community group focused on cleanliness of the venue, a feeling of safety when visiting the space, clean restrooms, and a quiet place to be with nature. They also want water fountains in addition to device chargers at benches and permanent chairs, Wi-Fi, food, coffee, alcoholic beverages at adult events, ice cream, fresh lemonade, healthy food options, bike racks, easy access for wheelchairs, and some kind of water feature (art installation).

**Question #8:**

The community participants recognize that it will cost money to run year-round programming in the venue. They believe that charging for performance will be required, but that tickets will have to be very affordable, on a sliding scale, or provided through some type of voucher system.

Some also suggested that we develop a Membership to Oasis @ Bartlett and that membership provides a benefit of either free or reduced admissions to Oasis @ Bartlett sponsored activities and events.

This group also recommended that we develop group rates for performances and other ticketed events.

Most often mentioned were "special" performances with high ticket prices that serve as fundraisers, grants, concession income, commissions on sales of art items, rental of tables for art shows and other open market events, renting the stage, business sponsorship, and vending machine profits as ways to earn revenue.

Others suggested that we need to have some of the events be "free of charge" or "pay as you wish". It was also suggested that Roxbury is a much more economically diverse neighborhood now, and that tickets for homeowners should be set higher than for those living in "affordable housing" Everyone agreed that there should be reduced ticket prices for children and seniors.

**Question #9:**

Everyone in this group agreed that social media must play a significant role in marketing Oasis

@ Bartlett and advertising its programming. Most in this group want targeted marketing that includes identifying all of the organizations, agencies, clubs, churches, and youth-oriented activities that have data bases, memberships, newsletters, bulletins and physical spaces where posters and flyers can be prominently displayed.

This group really liked the idea of advertising on local busses, given the proximity to Dudley Station.

Radio is good, but needs to be targeted to specific events going on the stage.

The Banner and Metro, as well as community calendars were also mentioned as good marketing tools.

The Kiosk in the Park was also cited and could be used to promote events and also educate visitors about the history of Roxbury on a rolling screen.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS**

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Consultant identify several locally-based youth groups that will agree to participate in additional focus groups in order to better promote the project to teen audiences**

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Oasis website prominently post the results of the community survey, artist focus groups, community focus groups, and a summary of the community engagement meeting.**

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the Creative Team members' bios and photos be posted on the website, as well.**

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT the community meeting scheduled for September 10th be well-advertised to community groups, neighborhood associations, civic groups, youth groups, etc. in order to draw a large and diverse community audience. Businesses that might become potential partners should receive personalized invitations to attend.**

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT a series of feature stories be developed over the next few months that can be published in local newspapers to gain momentum for the project.**

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT a community advisory group and a youth advisory group be identified and brought up to speed on the progress of the project. These groups can become a strong sounding board for the venue, as its programming begins to take shape for its inaugural year.**

## **COMMUNITY FOCUS GROUP AND INTERVIEW PARTICIPANTS**

Tyler Barbosa

Damien DePeiza

Wanda Devereaux

Ena Fox

Penny Hodge

Kelvin Juarbe

Kwe

France Neff

Joe Panchamsingh

Henry Parker

Raquel Robinson

Willie Wyman

## **FOCUS GROUP FACILITATORS/NOTE TAKER**

Andrea Kaiser (note taker)

Cordelia Moye



## ***REQUEST FOR INPUT FROM COMMUNITY RESIDENTS, BUSINESSES, AGENCIES AND LEADERS IN ROXBURY AND BOSTON***

A new arts plaza, "Oasis @ Bartlett", is planned on a 15,000 square foot lot within the Bartlett Station development in the Dudley Square neighborhood of Roxbury. A team of architects, theater designers, acoustical/audio visual engineers, and landscape architects are beginning to design the venue which will serve as a park and three-season performing and exhibition pavilion opening in 2020.

In order to guide the design team, we ask you to participate in one of 15 seventy-five minute FOCUS GROUP conversations. The topic: What would make this project a unique and exciting destination for the you and your neighbors? The volunteer Working Team has completed a community survey and focus groups with local artists and arts organizations. NOW WE NEED TO HEAR WHAT OUR AUDIENCES WANT AND NEED.

To sign up, email our Project Consultant, Andrea Kaiser at [ccstpg@verizon.net](mailto:ccstpg@verizon.net) or call her at 781-235-0555 to confirm a seat. For additional information, please visit our website [oasisbartlett.com](http://oasisbartlett.com). All focus groups will take place at Nuestra Comunidad, 56 Warren Street, Suite 200, Roxbury, MA 02119. The deadline for reserving a seat is August 1, 2018.

**IF YOU ARE A COMMUNITY RESIDENT, BUSINESS OWNER/OPERATOR, CIVIC LEADER, EDUCATOR, ELECTED OFFICIAL, NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOCIATION, COMMUNITY TEEN, MAIN STREET ORGANIZATION, PROVIDER OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES, REPRESENT LAW ENFORCEMENT, MEDIA, CIVIC AND FRATERNAL ORGANIZATION, REAL ESTATE AGENT/BROKER/OWNER, RESTAURANT/CAFE OR FOOD VENDOR, WE WANT TO HEAR YOUR FEEDBACK.**

### **SCHEDULE OF FOCUS GROUPS**

| <b><i>DAY</i></b> | <b><i>DATE</i></b> | <b><i>TIME</i></b>   |
|-------------------|--------------------|--|
| Monday            | August 6, 2018     | 10:00 am; 11:30 am; 1:00 pm; 2:30 pm; 4:00 pm; 5:30 pm; and 7:00 pm      |
| Tuesday           | August 7, 2018     | 8:00 am; 10:00 am; 11:30 am; 1:00 pm; 2:30 pm; 4:00 pm; 5:30 and 7:00 pm |

