



FULTON COUNTY ARTS & CULTURE PERFORMING ARTS DISABILITY STUDY

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INTRODUCTION

INTRODUCTION

Fulton County Arts & Culture is leading the way in an important discussion on accessibility in the arts. A topic that, beyond ADA, is not often addressed – this project has the potential to be a national case study for how we engage the disabled community and make the arts more accessible, beyond just addressing basic building code requirements.

Specifically, Fulton County Arts & Culture is looking to address the following objectives:

- Assess opportunities for individuals with diverse disabilities to fully utilize arts facilities in Fulton County as members of the audience, employees, and performers.
- Develop recommendations which will impact programming and employment, as well as plans for facility upgrades and renovation.
- Assist in the development of best practices for engaging artists with disabilities suitable for regional and national usage.
- Share lessons from the study with the broader arts community via educational outreach and training

GOALS

The Fulton County Arts Disability Study is focused on the following three goals.

Equity – Center people across the disability spectrum in every phase of the project. The project should be a case study on how to appropriately engage the disabled community.

Process – This project should provide a framework for how other municipalities can study their performing arts facilities, especially for performers and staff.

Leadership – The document should encourage other municipalities to follow similar processes to access the largest minority population in the country.

FULTON COUNTY ARTS AND CULTURE

Fulton County Arts and Culture (FCAC) is the County's Department of Arts and Culture and assists the Fulton County Board of Commissioners to develop arts related public policy, recommends funding of arts initiatives, and provides oversight for the development and implementation of County arts programming. FCAC is dedicated to supporting programs that create access and building capacity for arts and culture across Fulton County.

OVERVIEW OF THE PROCESS

The project process included three phases: Phase 1: Data Collection, Phase 2: Site Analysis, and Phase 3: Findings and Recommendations.

Phase 1: Data Collection

Phase 1 was focused on developing an understanding of existing conditions at performing arts venues. The project kicked-off in late September 2021. From October 2021 to February 2022, the project team gathered data, including demographics of the disabled community and information on performing arts venues in Fulton County. This was supplemented with two surveys, one, a Venue Survey, focused on gathering information on accessibility at the performing arts venues in Fulton County, and a second Disability Survey, that gathered information on accessibility in the performing arts community from performers, audience members, performing arts organization leaders, and performance venue leaders, among others. With this information a matrix was created that lists information on performing arts venues in Fulton County and was utilized to ensure a variety and diversity of venue types were included in this process.

VISION

This study seeks to identify barriers to accessibility for individuals with disabilities in order to utilize performing art facilities to their full extent. The study also seeks to develop best practices for engaging artists with disabilities in venues across the country to encourage venues to move beyond ADA compliance and center equitable accessibility as a guiding approach from construction through to operation.

during which draft recommendations were presented and discussed. The findings from this process were presented in a workshop/panel to the larger performing arts community, sharing means and methods to center equitable accessibility from construction through operation. Feedback was received and taken into consideration during this workshop.

DEMOGRAPHICS

To better understand the disabled community and their engagement in the performing arts, demographic data was collected for those who identify as living with an disability along with demographic data on workers who identify as disabled in the arts.

Demographic data was gathered from the CDC

Disability and Health Data System and the American Community Survey. It should be noted that while this data gives a general understanding of the disabled community, it is not comprehensive. Some individuals may identify with more than one disability, some individuals do not identify with a disability but could benefit from greater accessibility, and some individuals are not captured in this data.

SPENDING POWER

According to a 2018 report from the American Institutes for Research, the total disposable incomes (post-tax) for working-age individuals with disabilities is nearly \$500 billion. This number is comparable to the African American market at \$501 billion and the Hispanic market at \$582 billion.

Phase 2: Site Analysis

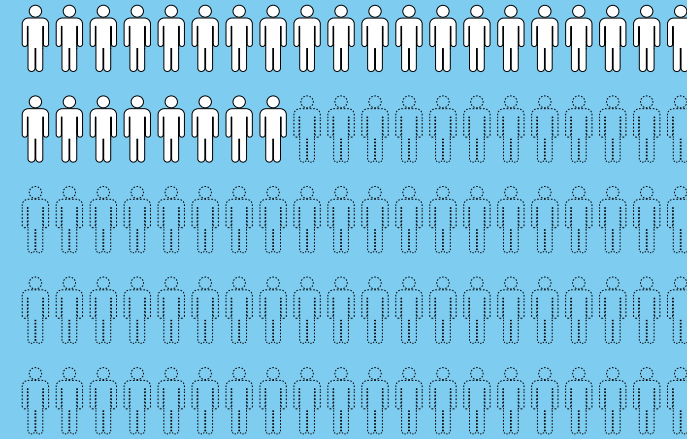
Phase 2 was focused on visiting performing arts venues to gain a first hand understanding of existing practices, assets, and challenges regarding accessibility. During this phase, a select group of Stakeholder Team participants joined Fulton County and the consultant team on May 4 and May 11 to visit five performing arts venues, reflecting a diverse set of venue types. During these site visits, information was gathered on barriers, strengths, and opportunities for providing accessibility, beyond just ADA standards and with a special focus on back of house access (stage, green room, tech area, etc.). Stakeholder interviews were also conducted during this time.

Phase 3: Findings and Recommendations

Phase 3 was focused on refining recommendations and sharing them with the arts community. On July 20 the second Stakeholder Team meeting was conducted

28% of all Georgia Residents (2,159,179 individuals) are living with an impairment.

(26% of adults in the United States (61 million) have some type of disability)



44% of these Individuals are 65 or Older

39.9% of people with an impairment are employed (compared to 65.2% of people without impairment)

Of the residents living with an impairment:

- 12%** have a mobility impairment
- 13%** have a cognitive impairment
- 7%** have an independent living impairment
- 6%** have a hearing impairment
- 6%** have a vision impairment
- 4%** have a self-care impairment

Data source: CDC Disability and Health Data System 2018

Note: Impairment is the vocabulary used by the CDC as a dimension of disability impacting “a person’s body structure or function, or mental functioning”

Employment Data

Data source: United States-wide data, American Community Survey 2017

5.9%

of all employed workers identify as disabled

8.1%

of musicians, singers & related workers identify as disabled

6.8%

of artists & related workers identify as disabled

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PERFORMING ARTS VENUES

PERFORMING ARTS VENUES

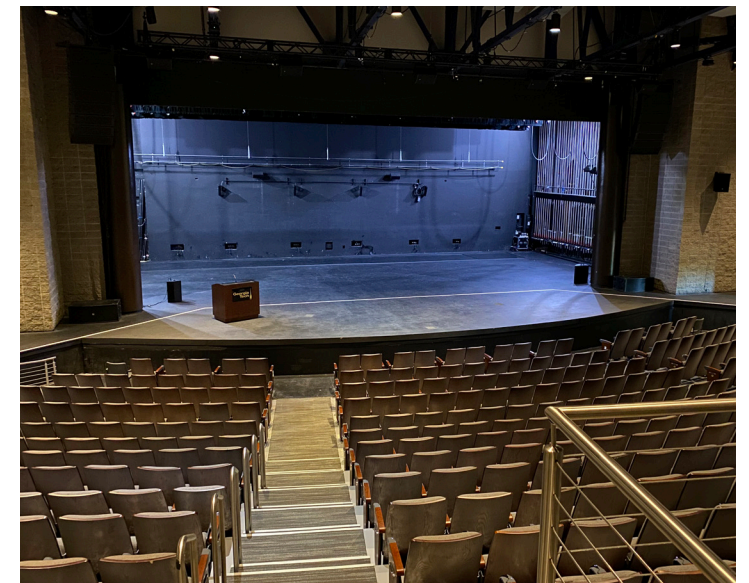
The following section provides information gathered at the beginning of this process to gain a more comprehensive understanding of the performing arts venues within Fulton County. A total of 36 venues were identified. These venues range in size, age, type, programming and production, offering theater, dance, music, puppetry, magic, improv and comedy.

All venues shown are primarily used for the performing arts. Spaces that may have a stage or small theater that are not in primary use were not included in this study.

Following is a map and matrix of performing arts venues in Fulton County. The matrix was utilized to help identify the seven venues that were selected for site visits, ensuring a diversity of size, type, and programming.



Theatrical Outfit in Midtown



Ferst Center for the Arts

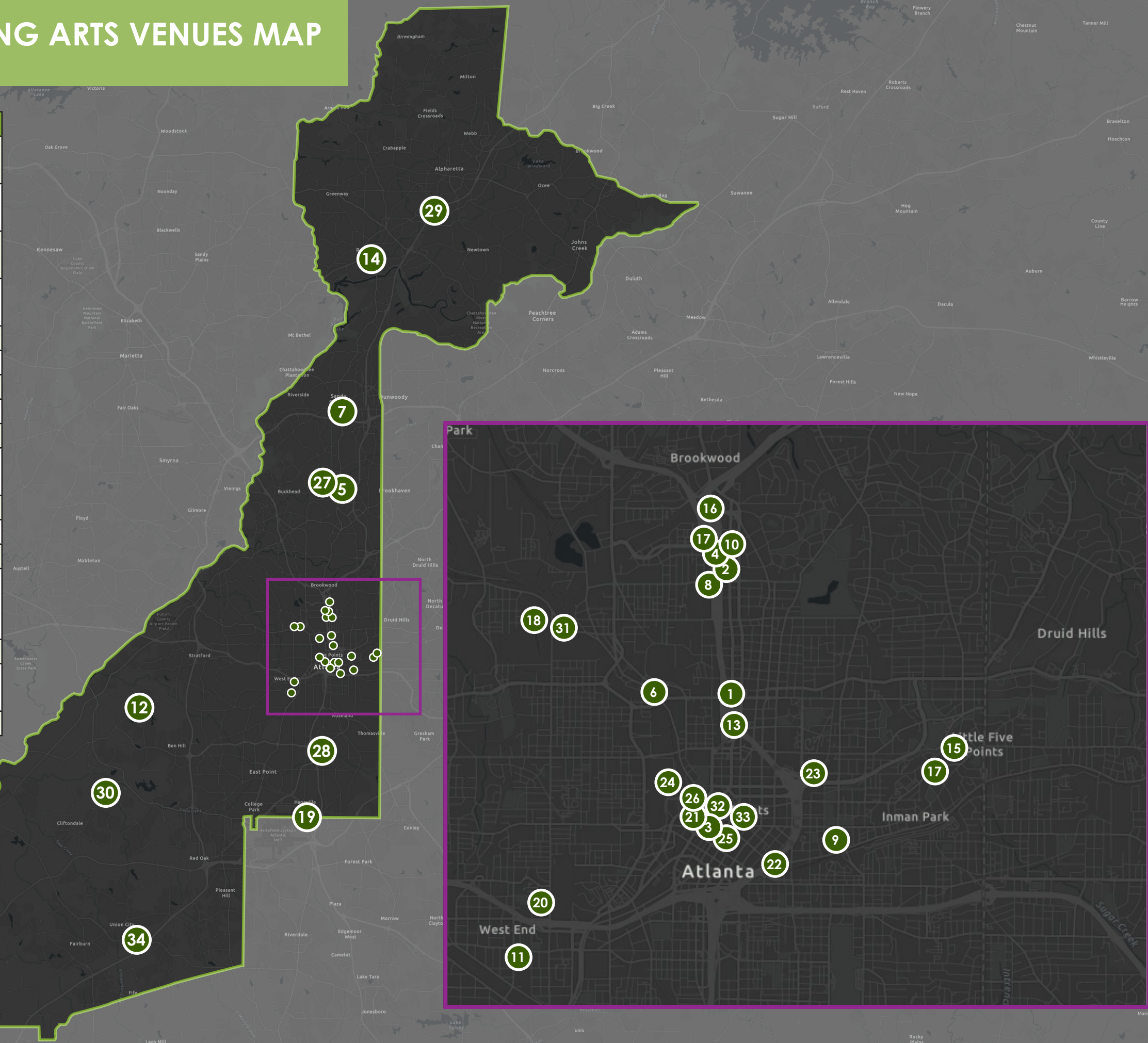


West End Performing Arts Center

FULTON COUNTY PERFORMING ARTS VENUES MAP

	VENUE NAME
1	Fox Theatre
2	Woodruff Arts Center (Alliance Theater)
3	Rialto Center for the Arts
4	Center Stage Theatre
4	The Loft
4	Vinyl
5	Buckhead Theatre
6	Ferst Center for the Arts
7	The Byers Theatre (Sandy Springs PAC)
8	Whole World Theatre Company
9	Dad's Garage Theatre Company
10	Center for Puppetry Arts
11	West End Performing Arts Center
12	Southwest Arts Center
13	Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse
14	Roswell Cultural Arts Center
15	7 Stages Theatre
16	Synchronicity Theatre
17	Horizon Theatre Company

	VENUE NAME
18	Actor's Express Theatre Company
19	Hapeville Performing Arts Center (Academy Theatre)
20	Ray Charles Performing Arts Center
21	The Balzer Theatre at Herren's (Theatrical Outfit)
22	Village Theatre
23	444 Theatre
24	Atlanta Magic Theatre
25	Florence Kopleff Recital Hall
26	Tabernacle
27	Cadence Bank Amphitheater at Chastain Park
28	Lakewood Amphitheater
29	Ameris Bank Amphitheater
30	Wolf Creek Amphitheater
31	Westside Cultural Arts Center/Terminus Modern Ballet Theatre
32	Central Library Auditorium
33	Auburn Avenue Research Library
34	Southside Theatre Guild



PERFORMING ARTS VENUE MATRIX

	Venue	Programming Status	Production Type	Types Of Acts	Stage Type	Stage Size	Year Est'd	Year Built	Venue Size	Annual Revenue	Ownership Status
1	Fox Theatre	Presenter/Rental	Theatre/Dance/Music/Comedy	National/International	Proscenium Stage	79'W x 34'D x 31'H	1929		4,665 Seats	Greater than \$10 million	Non Profit
2	Woodruff Arts Center (Alliance Theater)	Resident Company/Presenter/Rental	Theatre	National/Local	"Black Box Theatre (Hertz Stage) Proscenium (Coca-Cola Theatre)"	90' W x 37' D x 24.5' H (Coca Cola)	1968		650 Seats (Coca-Cola Stage); 200 Seats (Hertz Stage)	\$460 Million	Non Profit
3	Rialto Center for the Arts	Presenter/Rental	Theatre/Dance/Music	National/International	Proscenium Stage	40 X 40 ft.	1916		833 Seats	\$1 million - \$5 million	Public - GSU
4	Center Stage Theatre	Presenter/Rental	Music/Comedy/Sports	National		40' x 20' x 52"	1966	2010	1050 (750 Permanent Seats + Standing In Front Of Stage)	\$6 million	Private
4	The Loft	Presenter/Rental	Music/Comedy/Sports	National		20' x 18.5' x 28"	2005	2018	650		Private
4	Vinyl	Presenter/Rental	Music/Comedy/Sports	National		15' 8" x 15' x 20"	2003		300		Private
5	Buckhead Theatre	Presenter/Rental	Music/Comedy	National	Theater/Auditorium		1931	1995	1800		Private
6	Ferst Center for the Arts	Presenter/Rental	Theatre/Dance/Music	National/International	Proscenium	51' W x 51' D x 19.6' H	1992	2015	950		Public - Georgia Tech
7	The Byers Theatre (Sandy Springs PAC)	Resident Company	Theatre	Local/Regional	Proscenium	"67'-10" W x 18'-1" D x 21'-10" H"	2018		1070 Seats	\$1million - \$2million	Public - Sandy Springs
8	Whole World Theatre Company	Resident Company	Improv	Local/Regional	Platform Stage		1993		125	\$500,000	Non Profit
9	Dad's Garage Theatre Company	Resident Company	Theatre/Improv	Local/Regional	Thrust Stage, Black-Box Theatre, Platform Stage	30 feet across, 20 feet deep	1995		200	\$1.3 MILLION BUDGET	Non Profit
10	Center for Puppetry Arts	Presenter/Rental/Resident Company	Puppetry Theatre	National/International/Local/Regional	Black Box/Platform Stage	33' W x 19'D x 15'H proscenium stage; 22'W x 16'D x 17' H black box stage	1978	1918, many renovations over the years	Main stage Theater Seats 320+ In Bench Seating; The Downstairs Theater Offers 170 Individual Chairs.	\$1 million - \$5 million	Non Profit
11	West End Performing Arts Center	Presenter/Rental	Theatre, Dance, Music, Improv	Local/Regional, Amateur, Community	Black-Box Theatre	30' x 20'	1995	1950	125 Seat	\$100,001 - \$500,000	Public - Fulton
12	Southwest Arts Center	Presenter/Rental/Resident Company/Student Performances/Fine Art Exhibitions	Theatre/Dance/Music/Fine Art	National/International/Local/Regional/Amateur/Community	Black Box Theater, Performance Theater	40'X26'	2001 (2009)	2008	80-Seat Black Box Theater, 375-Seat Performance Theater	\$500,001 - \$1 million	Public - City of South Fulton

	Venue	Programming Status	Production Type	Types Of Acts	Stage Type	Stage Size	Year Est'd	Year Built	Venue Size	Annual Revenue	Ownership Status
13	Shakespeare Tavern Playhouse	Resident Company	Theatre	Local/Regional	Thrust Stage, Theatre In-The-Round	30x20ft	1984	1990, 2006	200	\$1 million - \$5 million	Non Profit
14	Roswell Cultural Arts Center	Presenter/Rental	Theatre/Dance/Music/Magic	Local/Regional	Proscenium Stage	24' x 34'	1993		600 Seat	\$100,001 - \$500,000	Public - Roswell
15	7 Stages Theatre	Resident Company/Presenter/Rental	Theatre	National/International	Proscenium Stage, Thrust Stage, Theatre In-The-Round, Black-Box Theatre, Site-Specific Theatre	46'1" W x 30' 4" D x 19' H (Main stage); 26' 6" W x 33' 3" D x 19' D	1979	1940s renovated in 1996	200 Seat Main Stage; 90 Seat Black Box	\$100,001 - \$500,000	Non Profit
16	Synchronicity Theatre	Resident Company/Rental	Theatre	National/Local	Proscenium Stage	20 x 40 ft	1997	2013	138 Seats	\$500,001 - \$1 million	Non Profit
17	Horizon Theatre Company	Resident Company	Theatre	Local/National/International	Black Box Theater		1983		172 Seats	\$1,000,000	Non Profit
18	Actor's Express Theatre Company	Resident Company	Theatre		Black Box Theater		1988	1995	175 Seats		Non Profit
19	Hapeville Performing Arts Center (Academy Theatre)	Resident Company/Rental/Presenter/Student Performances	Improv	Professional Theatre'	Proscenium Stage/Platform Stage	36' wide by 19' deep	1956	2019	99 Seats	\$100,001 - \$500,000	Non Profit
20	Ray Charles Performing Arts Center						2010		550-Seats/ 76k Sf		Public - Morehouse
21	The Balzer Theatre at Herren's (Theatrical Outfit)	Resident Company/Rental	Theatre		Proscenium Stage	25' x 50'	1976	2005	200 Seats	\$1 million - \$5 million	Non Profit
22	Village Theatre	Resident Company	Improv				2008		140		Private - Property Is Leased
23	444 Theatre								279 Seats		
24	Atlanta Magic Theatre	Resident Company	Magic				2016		40 Seats		Private
25	Florence Kopleff Recital Hall	Student Performances/Lecture Series									Public - GSU
26	Tabernacle	Presenter/Rental	Music, Comedy, Corporate/Special Events	National/International, Local/Regional	Proscenium Stage, Site-Specific Theatre	56'x28'x56"h modular	1996	1910	1700 Seats/ 2500	\$100,001 - \$500,000	Private
27	Cadence Bank Amphitheater at Chastain Park	Presenter			Outdoor Amphitheater		1944	2018	6,900 Seats		Public - Atlanta

	Venue	Programming Status	Production Type	Types Of Acts	Stage Type	Stage Size	Year Est'd	Year Built	Venue Size	Annual Revenue	Ownership Status
28	Lakewood Amphitheater	Presenter			Outdoor Amphitheater		1989		4,000 Under Pavilion; 3,000 Uncovered, 12,000 Lawn		Public - Atlanta
29	Ameris Bank Amphitheater	Presenter			Outdoor Amphitheater		2008		12000 Seats		Public - Alpharetta - Land owned By Robert W Woodruff Arts Center Inc
30	Wolf Creek Amphitheater	Presenter/Rental			Outdoor Amphitheater	108' wide x 54' deep	2012		5,420 seats: 1,027 Reserved Seating; 208 Table Seating; 3,867 General Admission Lawn Seating		PUBLIC
31	Westside Cultural Arts Center/Terminus Modern Ballet Theatre	Resident Company/Rental	Dance				2014		350 Seats (Flex Space)		PRIVATE
32	Central Library Auditorium	Presenter/Rental/Lecture Series						1980, renovated 2020			
33	Auburn Avenue Research Library	Presenter/Rental/Lecture Series						1994, renovated 2016			
34	Southside Theatre Guild	Presenter/Rental	Theatre	Local	Old movie theater converted into a performance theater with a raised stage and tiered seating		1973	1948, renovated 1975		\$50,001 - \$100,000	Private

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STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & SITE VISITS

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT & SITE VISITS

Following the premise of “nothing about the disability community without the disability community,” input and engagement from key stakeholders active in the performing arts were the main focus of the Fulton Arts Disability Study. A stakeholder team was convened inclusive of performers, venue operators, and accessibility advocates, with a diversity of disabilities. Site visits were conducted at seven performing arts venues of varying sizes and types. A survey was shared widely with the performing arts community, and additional interviews were completed to ensure a broad and diverse range of input.

ENGAGEMENT

Engagement centered on the Performing Arts Disability Study Stakeholder Team, the Site Visit Team, stakeholder interviews, and a survey shared widely to venues and artists involved in Performing Arts in Fulton County.

PROJECT MANAGEMENT TEAM

A project management team—composed of Fulton County Arts and Culture staff and the consultant team met bi-weekly throughout this process to discuss and refine the schedule and process.

STAKEHOLDER TEAM

The Stakeholder Team, consisting of a diverse group of individuals involved in the performing arts in Fulton County, along with individuals who identified with a variety of disabilities and ADA advocates, met twice throughout this process. This team was responsible for providing input and feedback on analysis, survey results and recommendations. A summary of each meeting is provided on the next page.

SITE VISIT TEAM

A smaller subset of the stakeholder team was invited to participate in site visits to a variety of performing arts venues in Fulton County. The intent was to understand existing conditions, challenges and opportunities in relation to accessibility of venues ranging from small, non-profit theaters to larger, international venues. Seven venues were visited over a three non-consecutive day period. Venue operators graciously toured the participants through the front and back of house while all engaged in active discussion regarding accessibility.

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT SCHEDULE

Stakeholder Team Meeting #1: Kick-Off

March 15, 2022
2:00 PM to 3:00 PM
Virtual (Zoom)

Site Visit Day 1

Wednesday, May 4, 2022
9:00 AM to 12:30 PM
Various Locations

Site Visit Day 2

Wednesday, May 11, 2022
9:00 AM to 12:30 PM
Various Locations

Site Visit Day 3

Thursday, June 2, 2022
9:00 AM to 12:30 PM
Various Locations

Stakeholder Team Meeting #2: Recommendations

Wednesday, July 20, 2022
12:00 PM to 1:00 PM
Virtual (Zoom)

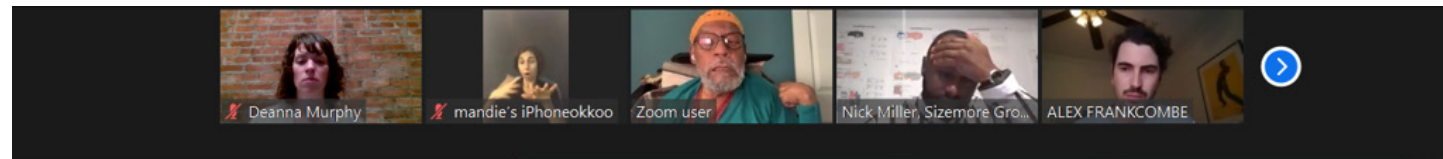
STAKEHOLDER TEAM MEETING #1 SUMMARY

On Tuesday, March 15, the Stakeholder Team gathered for the Project Kick-Off to discuss the project vision and goals, the project timeline, and results from the survey. During the presentation, discussions included: details on the site visits, what it means to go beyond ADA compliance. Beyond ADA compliance, in this context means to go beyond wheelchair access and focus on the larger needs of people with disabilities, considering mobility, cognitive, hearing, and blind/low-vision. Additionally, ADA generally covers the front of house, while this study is interested in uncovering back of house accessibility recommendations.

At the conclusion of the presentation, the project team facilitated an open discussion asking the following questions:

1. What are the things that we should be looking for based on your experience?
2. What are case studies that we should reference? In other words, who is doing this well?
3. What other considerations should be included in this study to address accessibility in our performing arts venues?

The meeting wrapped up with a brief description of the venue matrix and a presentation of the selected 5 performing arts venues (at the time 5, would later become 7) that the team will visit in April. At the conclusion of the meeting the project team agreed it would be best to send out the presentation to the Project Team to allow for the Team to read the final two slides and share any feedback via email.



PROJECT GOALS

- **Equity** – Center people with disabilities in every phase of the project. The project should be a case study on how to appropriately engage the disabled community.
- **Process** – This project should provide a framework for how other municipalities can study their performing arts facilities.
- **Leadership** – The document should encourage other municipalities to follow similar processes.
- **Anything else?**

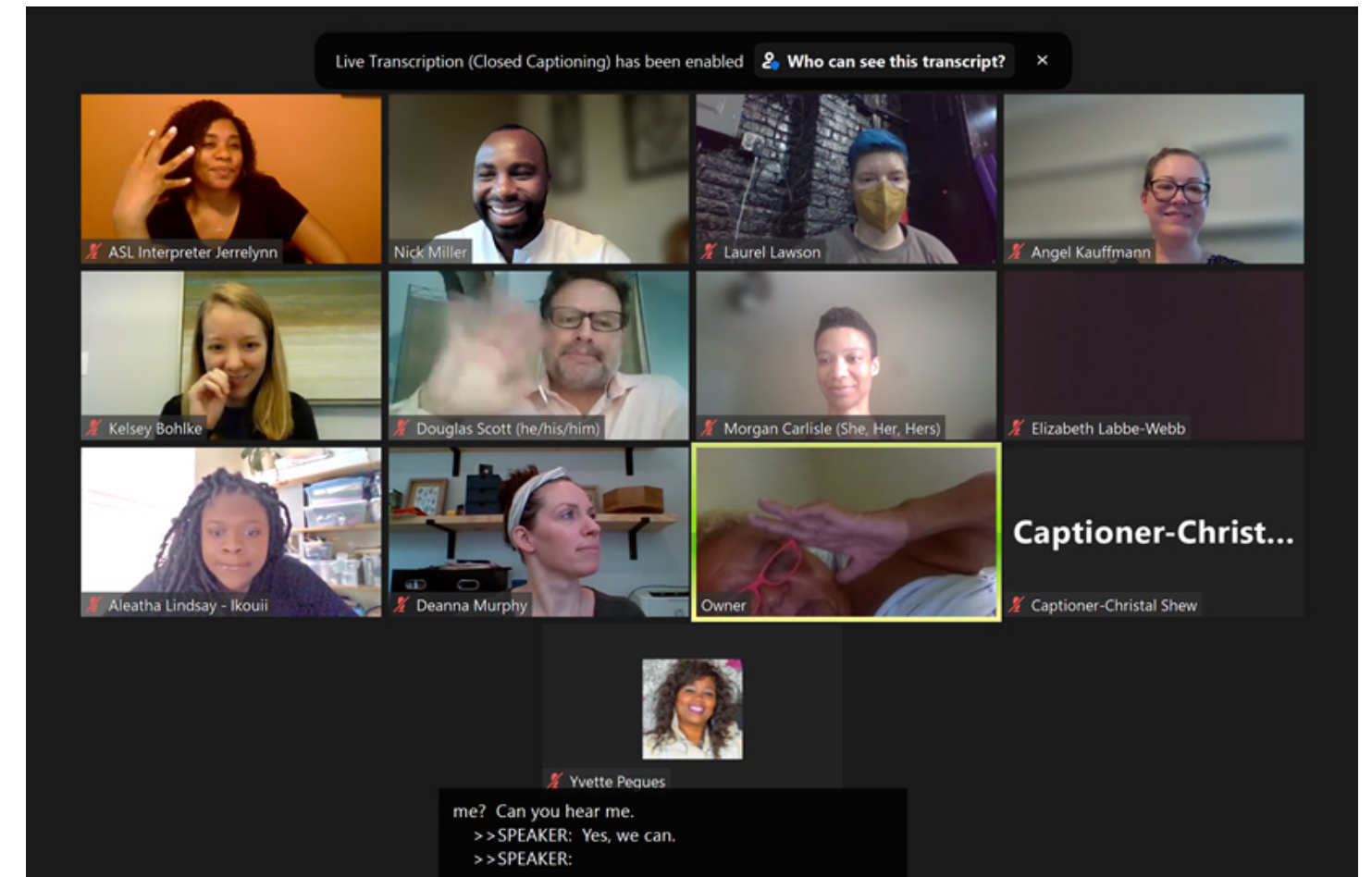


March 15th Virtual Stakeholder Team Meeting

STAKEHOLDER TEAM MEETING #2 SUMMARY

On Wednesday, July 20, the Stakeholder Team reconvened for their final meeting to discuss the updated vision and goals, the site visits, draft recommendations, and next steps. The focus of this meeting was for the consultant team to present draft recommendations to the advisory team for feedback and comment.

The Stakeholder Team responded to the general recommendations, as well as the more specific accessibility recommendations. The team provided input into how to make sure that recommendations were encompassing of all that was discussed and captured throughout this project process. At the conclusion of the meeting, the team discussed next steps which included refining recommendations, developing an appendix of resources, preparing a version of the presentation to share with the community, planning for the presentation to the larger arts community and the final report. Following the meeting, notes were sent to the stakeholder team as another opportunity to provide additional comments.



July 20th Virtual Stakeholder Team Meeting

PERFORMING ARTS VENUE SITE VISITS

To gather greater understanding of the existing conditions at performing arts venues, the Project Management Team and Site Visit Team toured seven venues over the course of three non-consecutive days in May and June of 2022. Below is a list of the individuals who participated in the series of site visits.

Morgan Carlisle	Nick Miller
Myrna Clayton	Deanna Murphy
Alex Frankcombe	Yvette Pegues
Angel Kauffman	Douglas Scott
Laurel Lawson	Bridgette Suttle
Aleatha Lindsay	Jethro Wooddall

Performing Arts Venues were chosen with the intent of showcasing a broad range of venue types and experiences. Utilizing the Venue Matrix, the main criteria used in the selection for the site visit locations were venue size (seating capacity), geography, types of acts, age of building, and ownership structure (public, private, non-profit, etc.).

At each of the site visits, representatives from the venue guided the team through a tour of the space, both front and back of house. This meant that the team observed how accessible navigation is for an audience member, from the entrance to seat, and for performers and back of house staff, from the loading dock to the dressing room to the stage.

Though our team carefully examined each venue and their assets and challenges to being truly accessible, these visits were in no way seen as an opportunity to grade or score these venues, but rather a learning opportunity for our site visit team and managers at these venues.

Following each day of site visits the site visit team sent their personal notes describing their experiences at the

venue, noting ways each venue provided accessibility and areas for improvement. The Sizemore team also took notes of more technical measures such as ADA compliance. Feedback from site visits were used to inform the overall recommendations for this project.

The following was the site visit schedule:

Day 1: Wednesday, May 4th

1. Rialto Center for the Arts at Georgia State University - 80 Forsyth St NW, Atlanta, GA 30303
2. 7 Stages - 1105 Euclid Ave NE, Atlanta, GA 30307

Day 2: Wednesday, May 11th

3. West End Performing Arts Center - 945 Ralph David Abernathy Blvd, Atlanta, GA 30310
4. Center for Puppetry Arts - 1404 Spring St NW, Atlanta, GA 30309
5. Dad's Garage - 569 Ezzard St SE, Atlanta, GA 30312

Day 3: Thursday, June 2nd (consultant team only)

6. Ferst Center of the Arts - 349 Ferst Dr NW, Atlanta, GA 30332
7. Balzer Theater at Herren's (Theatrical Outfit) - 84 Luckie St NW, Atlanta, GA 30303

PERFORMING ARTS VENUE SITE VISITS

Following is more information on the seven site visit locations. These site visits helped to establish a baseline from which accessibility recommendations could be further explored and detailed for all Fulton County performing arts venues.

7 STAGES

Year Established: 1979

Neighborhood: Little Five Points

Programming Status: Resident Company, Presenter, Rental

Production Type: Theatre

Types of Acts: National, International

Stage Type: Proscenium Stage, Thrust Stage, Theatre in-the-round, Black-box Theatre, Site-specific Theatre

Stage Size: 46'1" W x 30' 4" D x 19' H (Main stage)

Venue Size: 200 seats (Main Stage); 90 seats (black-box)

Annual Revenue: \$100,001 - \$500,00

Ownership Status: Non-profit



CENTER FOR PUPPETRY ARTS

Year Established: 1978

Neighborhood: Midtown

Programming Status: Resident Company, Presenter, Rental

Production Type: Puppetry theatre

Types of Acts: National, International

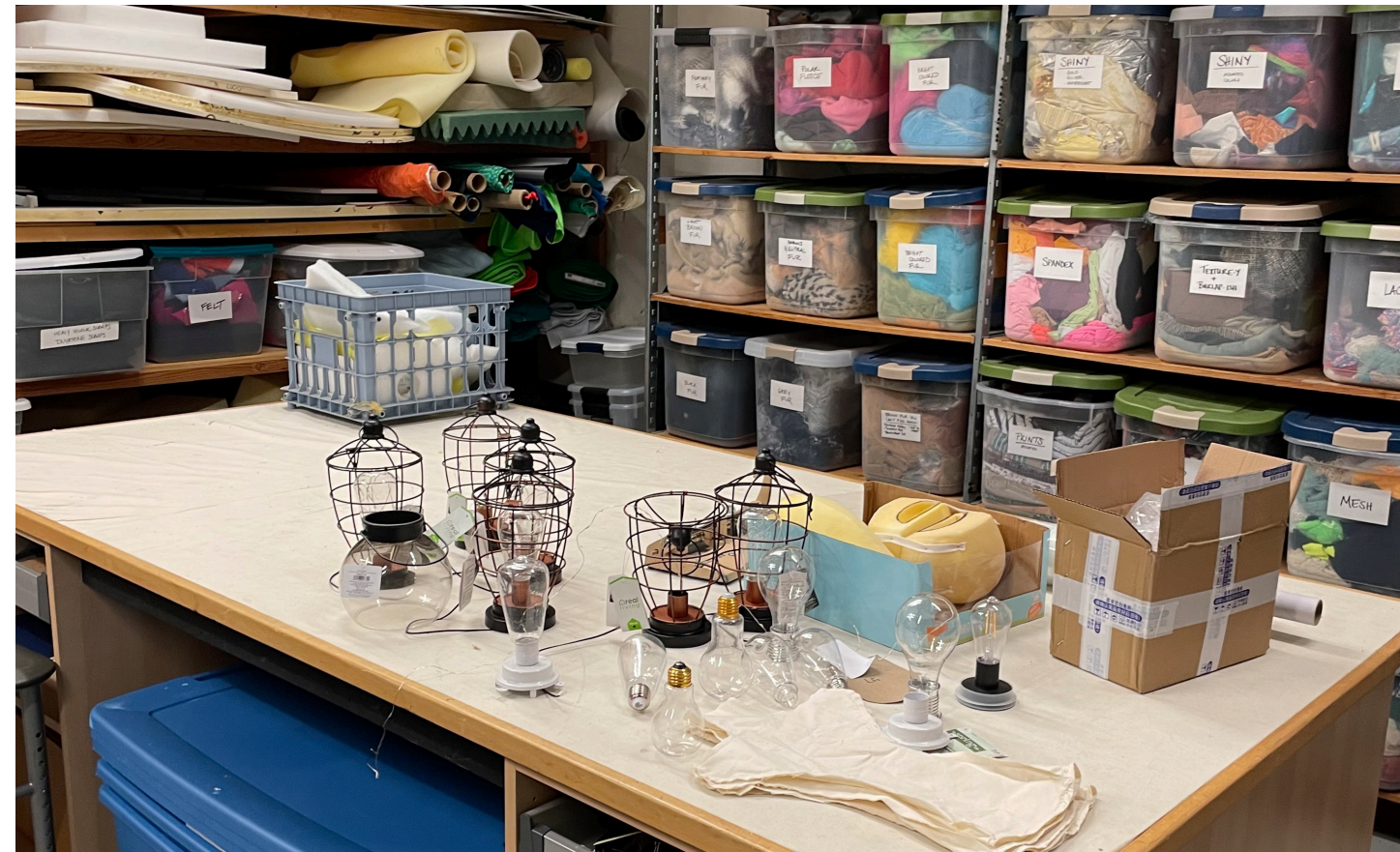
Stage Type: Proscenium, black-box, platform stage

Stage Size: 33'W x 19'D x 15'H (main stage); 22'W x 16'D x 17' H (downstairs theatre)

Venue Size: 320 bench seats (Main stage Theater); 170 individual chair (Downstairs Theater)

Annual Revenue: \$1 million - \$5 million

Ownership Status: Public (Fulton County)



DAD'S GARAGE

Year Established: 1995. renovated in 2015

Neighborhood: Old Fourth Ward

Programming Status: Resident Company

Production Type: Theatre, Improv

Types of Acts: Local, Regional, National, International

Stage Type: Black-box/platform stage

Stage Size: 30'W x 20'D

Venue Size: 200 seats

Annual Revenue: \$1.3 million budget

Ownership Status: Non-Profit



FERST CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Year Established: 1992, renovated in 2018

Neighborhood: Midtown

Programming Status: Presenter, Rental

Production Type: Theatre, Dance, Music

Types of Acts: Local, National, International

Stage Type: Proscenium

Stage Size: 51' W x 51' D x 19.6' H

Venue Size: 950 seats

Annual Revenue:

Ownership Status: Public (Georgia Institute of Technology)



RIALTO CENTER FOR THE ARTS

Year Established: 1916, rebuilt in 1962, renovated in 1996

Neighborhood: Downtown

Programming Status: Presenter, Rental

Production Type: Theatre, Dance, Music

Types of Acts: National, International

Stage Type: Proscenium

Stage Size: 40'W x 40'D

Venue Size: 833 seats

Annual Revenue: \$1 million - \$5 million

Ownership Status: Public (Georgia State University)



THE BALZER THEATRE AT HERREN'S (THEATRICAL OUTFIT)

Year Established: 1976. renovated in 2005

Neighborhood: Downtown

Programming Status: Resident Company, Rental

Production Type: Theatre

Types of Acts: Local, National, International

Stage Type: Proscenium

Stage Size: 50'W x 25'D

Venue Size: 200 seats

Annual Revenue: \$1 million - \$5 million

Ownership Status: Non-profit



WEST END PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

Year Established: 1995

Neighborhood: Midtown

Programming Status: Presenter, Rental

Production Type: Theatre, Dance, Music, Improv

Types of Acts: Local/Regional, Amateur

Stage Type: Black-box theater

Stage Size: 30' x 20'

Venue Size: 125 seats

Annual Revenue: \$100,001 - \$500,000

Ownership Status: Public (Fulton County)



STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

During the engagement process, the Project Management Team hosted several stakeholder interviews of subject matter experts covering specialties such as computer-based accommodations, user-experience, and education. They were all given the same list of questions as follows:

1. Do you have any experience with those involved in performing arts with disabilities?
2. What are some considerations for people with disabilities as audience members? Employees? Performers?
3. What makes an event/venue accessible?
4. What are the barriers to making events or venues accessible?
5. What can an organization do to make sure the activities they run are accessible?

Though these questions and follow-up discussion valuable feedback and ideas were gathered that informed the recommendations. Some of these conversations elaborated on concepts developed during earlier engagement but, there were also new ideas presented during this phase of engagement particularly more general ideas around how to make a work environment more equitable and accessible for staff.

Stakeholder interviews included:

- Matt Segall, Program Director, Emory Autism Center
- Norah Sinclair, Information and Instructional Designer, Center for Inclusive Design & Innovation
- Karen Milchus, Research Scientist, Center for Inclusive Design & Innovation

PERFORMING ARTS ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

Two surveys were conducted during this process. The first was a questionnaire sent to the 36 venues asking for more information on the venue history, types and accessibility accommodations. This venue survey was used to create the Venue Matrix in Section 2.

A second survey was shared widely with performing art venues, performing artists, venue staff and boards. This survey was focused on collecting information on what accessibility is provided at venues, what are the general challenges with access and what solutions have been successful. Following is a summary of the performing arts accessibility survey.

PERFORMING ARTS ACCESSIBILITY SURVEY

Following are quotes from the open ended question: What strategies, policies, or programs do you think should be implemented as part of the Fulton County Performing Arts and Disability Study?

“Recognizing that access goes beyond the ADA. Assuring that a performance space is fully accessible -onstage, backstage, production areas, lobby, restrooms, variety of seating choices”

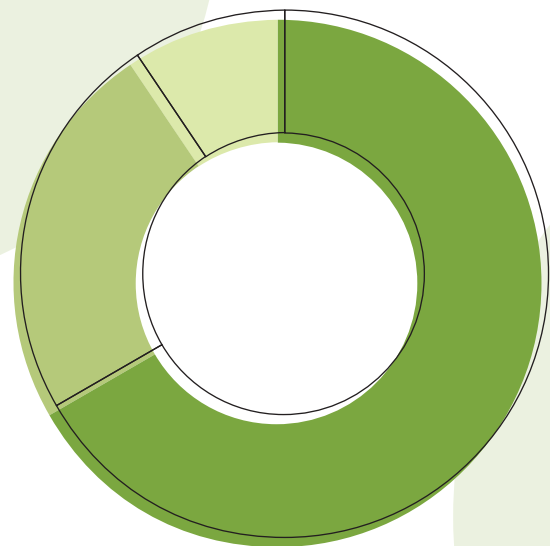
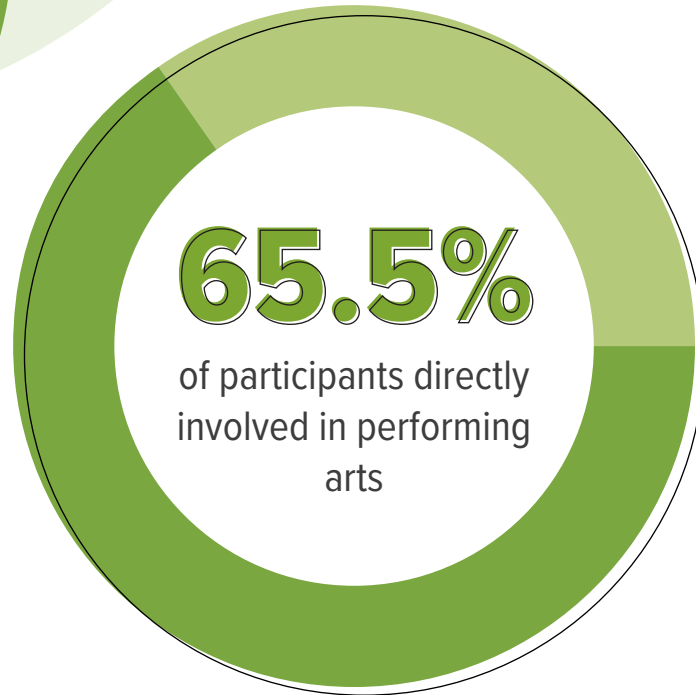
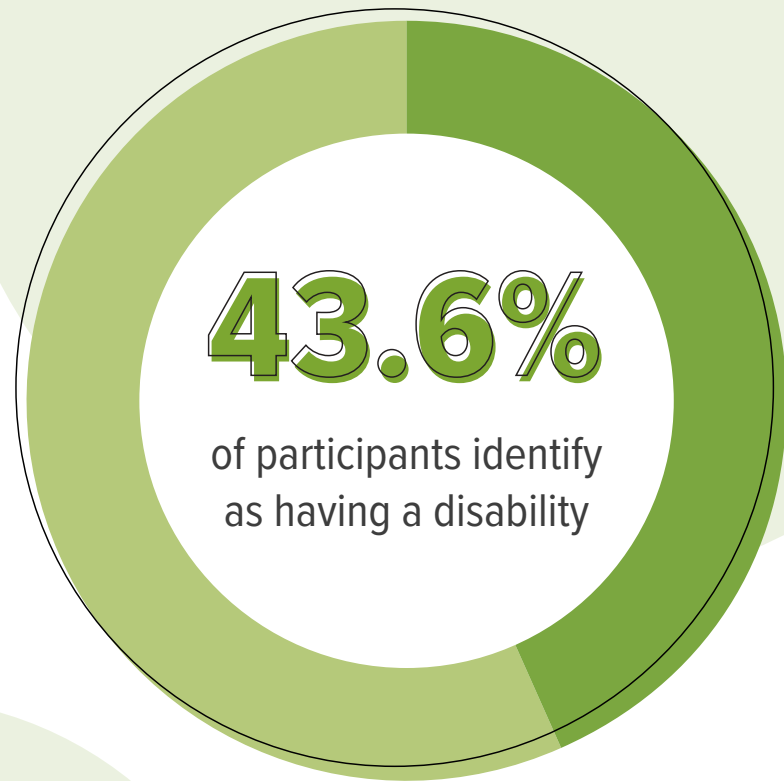
“How the arts can provide programming TO this audience. In other words, meet them where they are”

“Fulton County should take heed of the work of emerging and established disability arts professionals to ensure that local programming not only includes but welcomes disabled audiences and artists”

“Ensure the majority involvement of persons with disabilities in the formation, evaluation and final application of this study since it is ostensibly for this audience”

“Everything needs to be created with the idea that anyone who wants to participate can regardless of disability or income.”

Total Survey Responses: 56



65.5% female participants
23.6% male participants
9.1% non-binary participants

In your opinion, what makes an art activity or event accessible or welcoming?

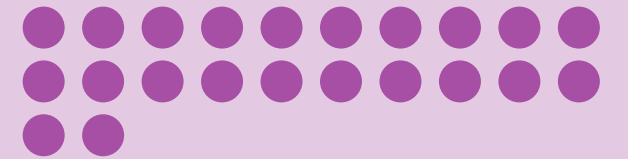
Individuals can physically get into the venue, performance area, and to their seat

41%
23 responses



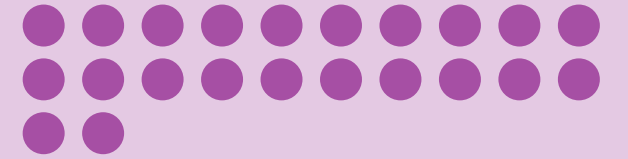
I know in advance what kind of accommodations are available

39%
22 responses



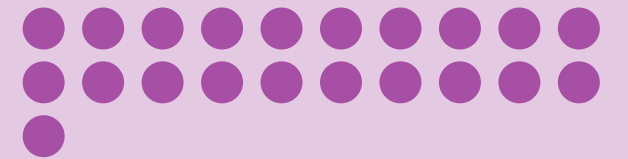
There is a wheelchair accessible restroom

39%
22 responses



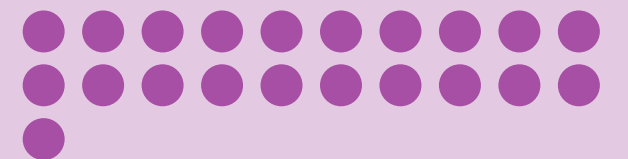
There are disabled people working, performing, or exhibiting at the event

36%
21 responses



There are multiple ways that individuals can choose to participate

36%
21 responses

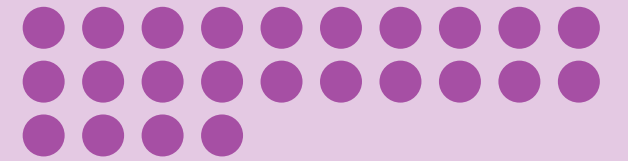




What kinds of access do you provide for your events or content?

Virtual/Remote Access

43%
24 responses



Other Kinds of Mobility Access

29%
16 responses



Financial Access

27%
15 responses



Wheelchair Access

27%
15 responses



ASL Interpretation

21%
12 responses



Of 37 performing arts venues across Fulton County...

8%

Three venues state hosting programming or sensory access for neurodivergent audience members



14%

Five venues state offering regular to irregular ASL interpretation for performances



30%

Eleven venues state offering assisted listening devices for their performances.



38%

Fourteen venues state having dedicated accessible seating within their venues.



4

RECOMMENDATIONS

RECOMMENDATIONS

This section provides recommendations for building inclusive performing arts venues encompassing of the audience, the performers, staff, and technicians. Recommendations are provided to not only the venues but also the County, as the funders (municipal and non-profit granters) need to be invested in these recommendations and lead the way to change.

In order to encourage an inclusive adoption, and to prevent “picking and choosing” solutions, these recommendations were organized to be considered holistically, rather than by disability type. Additionally, many people with disabilities identify with more than one disability and many more will benefit from these solutions who may not identify with a disability. The recommendations have been divided into the following categories:

- General Recommendations
- Front & Back of House
- Back of House: Performers/Staff/Technicians
- Front of House: Audience

These recommendations were drafted using information gathered throughout each stage of this project, including assessment, site visits, and stakeholder surveys, interviews and meetings.



GENERAL INCLUSIVE RECOMMENDATIONS

This process and the recommendations are important, however, without accountability little will change. The following recommendations focus on who is responsible for checking compliance, who is responsible for checking on venues to ensure compliance is updated, what is the “carrot” to encourage compliance and see the change, and what are the resources to help small venues actively address these issues.

Recommendations to Government Arts and Culture Department

The local or state arts and culture department should be responsible for overseeing follow-up and follow through to creating inclusive access to our arts and culture venues – including public, private, and non-profit venues. The following are key ways this can be achieved:

- **Government arts and culture departments to take lead in ADA Compliance:** appoint a department staff position to conduct regular follow-ups with venues to ensure ADA compliance and working order. Work with venues to assist (resources, financially) in upgrading facilities to meet ADA compliance and furthering accessibility, beyond ADA, to the disabled community – inclusive access for all.
- **Funding linked to ADA Compliance:** Funding entities should require accessibility compliance in order to obtain funding. Show proof of compliance/site visits to ensure ADA is being met. If a venue is going above and beyond ADA, they can solicit additional funding sources or be awarded extra points in a competitive funding process.
- **Accessibility Certification:** Municipality to provide a certification for venues that provide high levels of accessibility and link certification to funding opportunities.

- **Accessibility Locations:** Municipality to develop a public list of accessible venues and what access they provide. By making this list public, the disabled community is given important information on what they can expect before arriving at a venue. This may also encourage venues to upgrade their facilities in order to be included on this list, as it provides free marketing and outreach to individuals who may need ADA or additional accommodations.
- **Economic Impact Reports:** The municipality to report on the economic impact of the disabled community on performing arts venues. How much spending capital does this community have? What are the approximate dollars lost for not providing accessible spaces?
- **Percentage of Construction to Accessibility:** Similar to a percentage for the arts, municipalities could leverage (re)construction by requiring a percentage of the construction budget be allocated to ADA and inclusive access improvements.
- **Dedicated funding/grants for accessibility upgrades, with a priority on back of house:** Municipalities to identify grant funding (municipal budget, arts grants, etc.) dedicated to ADA and inclusive access upgrades at performing arts venues.

Recommendations for the Venue

- **Staff Training:** Venues and organizations should consider training programs for staff to help them develop sensitivity to people with disabilities, how to accommodate disabled patrons, and support other disabled staff and performing artists. Training may include but is not limited to:
 - Creating welcoming environments
 - Considering caregivers, family, and friends

- Artist versus Audience
- Disability equity and justice
- Venue-specific accessibility
- Awareness and proper terminology (example: handicapped parking vs. accessible parking)
- Training on how to properly assist someone with a disability – inclusive of all disabilities
- Process for how to channel complaints, issues, comments
- Transit and transportation accessibility

Venues should also take responsibility for the accessibility of all other components within a performance venue. These components include, but are not limited to:

- **Disability-Centered Experiences:** In addition to staff training employees should listen and respond to the requests of disabled staff and or patrons regarding their specific needs to best accommodate them. Recognizing that many disabled individuals experience additional labor and bias in order to have their access needs met, create a culture that focuses on equity and communicates clearly what is available at the venue and at each performance.
- **Accessibility-Focused Performances:** Venues should consider hosting performances that are developed inclusively and equitably. To launch a successful inclusive event, venues should work with groups already in this space. Best practices gathered from these accessibility-focused events can then be applied to normally planned performances.
- **Staff and Leadership Diversity:** Employers should not only prioritize intersectional diversity in the hiring of staff roles but include individuals with disabilities in leadership positions, including both paid and volunteer roles such as advisory boards across disabilities to ensure inclusion in company-wide decisions.
- **Public Transportation:** Provide accessibility

to/from public transportation for audience, performers, and back of house staff.

- **Provide Clear Accessibility Information Upfront:** Provide accessibility information on the website or communicate clearly to artist/staff/audience what is available for disabled individuals prior to visiting. Provide photo descriptions and alternative text.
- **Inclusivity in All Programming:** Ensure accessibility is incorporated into all programming from performances to calls for artists to audition fairs and showcases.
- **Assist in Providing the Right Access:** Provide an online form or method for individuals to get in touch with the venue ahead of time to request accommodations. For example, some individuals who identify as deaf or hard of hearing communicate verbally as opposed to Sign Language.
- **Funding:** To pay for improvements, performing arts venues should pursue grants and other funds available through local governments and charitable organizations, specifically focused on access improvements. Seek opportunities for public-private partnerships or collaborative grants to secure funding. Resources identified during this process:
 - Title 1 School Funding
 - Video interpretation: Sorenson
 - Federal Transit Administration (FTA) Innovative Coordinated Access and Mobility Grants

FRONT AND BACK OF HOUSE RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations may see benefit to both front of house (audience) and back of house (performers, staff, and technicians).

- Incorporate braille on signage throughout venue at ADA accessible height
- Use tactical elements throughout venue to assist those who identify as low vision or blind
- Elevators to include voice activation and/or speaker announcements
- Review all communications and purchase pathways, including websites, for screen reader usability; ensure visual accessibility of all materials, including contrast/size considerations and image or video descriptions in all material
- Incorporate blinking light and strips in elevators and other spaces which use audible cues
- Include automatic lights in corridors and all backstage rooms
- Create a sensory-friendly room with monitors
- Avoid fluorescent lights – can be an auditory distraction
- Work with individuals to understand their needs and how best to accommodate them. Note that there are a variety of levels of the neurodivergent spectrum.
- Provide accessibility into venue and backstage, including ADA compliant ramps, wheelchair lift, accessible door opener, handrails, modular stage
- Ensure the slopes of all ramps, front and back of house, meet ADA slope ratio of 1 inch to 1 foot
- Box office windows height and depth to be ADA accessible
- ADA parking areas to avoid sloping
 - Provide ADA compliant parking for audience and for back of house
 - Provide ADA compliant access from parking and sidewalks into the building – including curb cuts and thresholds
 - Adequate number of spaces for parking based on theatre seating
- Include safety in signaling (i.e. show time and emergencies) at entrance and exit of building and stage
- Create a system that supports independence for artists and audience members across the disability spectrum



Rialto Center for the Arts front of house (above) and Ferst Center for the Arts back of house (below)

BACK OF HOUSE: PERFORMERS, STAFF & TECHNICIAN RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure loading dock, backstage and access to stage is clear from obstructions with ADA clearance requirements - a minimum of 3' wide clearance
- Include automatic lighting in all backstage corridors and rooms
- Train staff on how to assist blind and low vision patrons and performers
- Incorporate audio systems in all backstage areas to communicate with performers
- Provide room/space (sound booth) for a live audio describer
- Provide tactile differences within the venue (i.e. at the edge of the stage for individuals who identify as low vision/blind). This may be beneficial for all performers as bright lights make visibility difficult at times.
- Provide enough space on stage (in front of curtains) for ASL interpreter
- When interviewing staff, provide questions ahead of time and explain expectations of interview, so individual feels prepared. Consider opportunities to show they can do the job, not just talk about it.
- Incorporate mentorship in staffing with disabilities – help make staff feel welcome and supported.
- Ensure ADA access from back stage entrance to green room/backstage/dressing rooms to wing space, crossover space and stage – accessible clearances and ADA turning radii throughout.
- Ensure counter heights in dressing rooms are ADA compliant
- Ensure backstage bathrooms and pathway to bathrooms are accessible and unobstructed throughway, including depth of sink, ensuring reach to soap/paper towel are accessible
- Train staff to assist mobility-impaired patrons/performers
- Ensure access to tech/control rooms such as counter heights, window heights, lift access, and movable controls are accessible
- Ensure sign-in/sign-out is accessible. For example: if in-person, make sure print is accessible; if online, make sure website is accessible; if clocking in, make sure machine is accessible and at an accessible height
- Create a backstage entrance and ensure the loading dock is for equipment transportation, not a human entrance.
- Hire staff that is multi-lingual (ASL, cerebral palsy, etc.)



Center for Puppetry Arts booth (above) and 7 Stages backstage (below)

FRONT OF HOUSE: AUDIENCE RECOMMENDATIONS

- Ensure that staff knows the locations of accessible seating and accommodations
- Provide visual accessibility of all on-site materials, including large print programs and image descriptions
- Include virtual accessibility to performances with audio description
- Offer audio description for performances, live describer or pre-recorded.
- Provide headsets for audio description
- Incorporate best practices for on-stage ASL interpretation; consider lighting, sightlines, and viewing field experience
- Use technology including monitors to provide virtual accessibility for ASL services and virtual performances with ASL accessibility
- Reserve seats for individuals who identify as deaf or hard of hearing to provide line of sight to stage and ASL interpretation
- Incorporate rear window captioning systems
- Incorporate integrated ASL in performance, such as shadow acting
- Provide a low-stimulation or quiet space (or sensory room)- set aside from main seating without noise – can provide a monitor to allow for availability to watch
- Offer sensory access through technical performance standards (avoiding or communicating clearly regarding possible triggers such as strobe lights or certain sounds) and offer sensory access such as headphones and glasses, low-stimulation/sensory room, and limited number of tickets
- Consider line of sight from accessible seating that are labeled
- Provide multiple options for accessible seating
- Provide modular seating and movable arm rests
- Provide more accessible seating that is not pushed to the extremes of the venue – improved line of site
- Provide a digital experience for accessible seating
- Provide seating for people with disabilities who may come in groups with other individuals with disabilities and with individuals who do not identify with a disability
- Provide tactile differences on flooring from entrance to seating area



Theatrical Outfit in Midtown audience seating (above) and West End Performing Arts Center backstage (below)

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Additional resources identified during this process include:

- [Kennedy Center resources](#)
 - [Staff training resources](#)
 - [Large-print Programming](#)
- [Federal Plain Language Guidelines](#)
- [Health Literacy](#) (a guide for simplifying the user experience)
- [Web Accessibility Perspective Videos from W3C](#) (World Wide Web Consortium)
- [disABILITY LINK](#) (a grassroots, peer-led, non-medical organization which offers various services, assistance, and information regarding persons with disabilities)
- [Tools for Life](#), Georgia's Assistive Technology Act Program
- [Georgia Department of Labor Vocational Rehabilitation \(VR\)](#)

FULTON COUNTY ARTS & CULTURE PERFORMING ARTS DISABILITY STUDY

DRAFT AUGUST 2022