



**The Ella Project**

**Music and Culture Policy Platform**

**October 2017**

**The Ella Project respectfully submits the following recommendations to the next administration with an overarching goal to promote a healthy ecosystem where music and culture may continue to thrive in New Orleans.**

As New Orleans moves towards its next municipal election, we see an opportunity to re-envision the city's cultural policies and strategies. We see cities across the globe developing cultural strategies to develop neighborhoods, enhance education, and improve their quality of life. We see many of these communities using intentional models to create a cultural climate that New Orleans has developed organically and often without the aid of city government. To the contrary, our city has often been indifferent at best to our cultural creatives and the overall role they play in New Orleans.

Moving into our next 300 years, we believe that New Orleans's cultural community and assets will be critical to the sustainability of New Orleans as a place for residents to live and tourists to visit. We see an opportunity for city government to play a key role in flipping the paradigm so that music and culture is embraced and supported instead of ignored and restricted.

To accomplish this, we encourage you to envision New Orleans as a city where artists and musicians are self-empowered socially and economically, where the means of production and distribution will be rooted in the community and decision makers, and where urban planners and business leaders will appreciate the importance of creatives to their long-term interests. The relationship between the makers of culture and the mainstream power structure will be reversed. The default policy will be to encourage city-wide music and cultural performance and tradition with limited exception, justified only by reasonable, consistent and clear considerations and measures that are not selectively enforced.

We seek a further shift of thinking regarding the public sector's relationship with the cultural community. As respected members of their communities, artists and creatives often have a deep understanding of their neighborhood's issues, often run grassroots arts education programs, and often participate in cherished neighborhood traditions. We believe that creatives can play a major role in working with policy makers on education, public safety, healthcare, and housing.

**To achieve our goal of promoting a healthy ecosystem for music and culture in New Orleans, we recommend the next administration implement the following:**

- **Develop a comprehensive music and culture strategy** using best practices and an inclusive process with measurable outcomes and accountability enforcement.
- **Establish a full-time, designated and authorized liaison between city government and the music and cultural community**, with an independent budget and staff exclusively committed to working with stakeholders to address music and culture issues on both a proactive and reactive basis. Whether a music office, a music commission, and whether a city agency and/or an independent nonprofit and/or a hybrid, include stakeholders in the development of the structure that will oversee this work.
- **Develop a comprehensive sound strategy** and fully fund it for implementation before 2019.
  - **Hire a qualified sound expert** as an independent contractor to shepherd this process, and ensure all stakeholders have an equally reasonable part of the process.
  - **Immediately formally repeal section 66-205 of the municipal Noise Ordinance**, which is the city-wide ban on musical instruments after 8pm. This section has already been publicly recognized as unconstitutional by the New Orleans City Attorney's office.
- **Promote public health care models** that sustain and strengthen our cultural community culture in mind, body and spirit. Work directly with the New Orleans Musicians Clinic to develop strategies for the well-being of our musicians and culture bearers.
- **Develop a strategy for the night-time economy**, including but not limited to shifting hours on several code enforcement officers to address issues such as sound, parking, litter and other matters that often fall to NOPD.
- **Support ongoing music and cultural education and performance**, including neighborhood-based grassroots initiatives.
  - **Reduce fees associated with parading for Social Aid and Pleasure Clubs.** Establish a permit structure that encourages cultural traditions, with fair and anti-discriminatory standards.
  - **Increase the Community Arts Fund** by \$60,000 per year for a total of \$240,000 during the first term to support parading and public performance activities via the More Joy funding category and to support continued arts education via the city's organizational funding category.
  - **Fund local musical acts on tour by piggybacking on the State's Music Ambassadors program.** Use existing tourism funds (as the State does) to provide a stipend to qualifying musical acts performing outside the state borders in a qualified venue. Supplement the State's \$1,000 stipend per qualifying musical act with an additional \$500 from city funds.