



## VIBRANT COMMUNITIES

Parks | Children | Nature | Arts

**TO:** Donnie Oliveira, Deputy City Administrator, Community & Economic Development Service Area

**FR:** Chariti Montez, Director, Office of Arts & Culture

**cc:** Michael Jordan, City Administrator  
Sonia Schmanski, Deputy City Administrator, Vibrant Communities Service Area

**DATE:** September 27, 2024

**RE:** Market Feasibility | Collaborative Keller Meetings, August 22 – September 25, 2024

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### Introduction and Background

As part of the Collaborative meetings to ideate a joint project between the City, Halprin Landscape Conservancy (HLC), and Portland State University (PSU), a proposal emerged to move forward with new construction at PSU and renovation at the Keller Auditorium, with the goal of having two Broadway-capable venues, resulting in activation of the entire Open Space Sequence and no disruptions to Broadway and user groups' programming. Related to this project, any reference to "Broadway-capable" venues should be interpreted as a venue with the specific production requirements to support a Broadway performance, including but not limited to, stage size, line sets, and overall production capabilities.

After several meetings with representatives from the City, HLC, and PSU, the larger team divided into subcommittees to discuss four key components of the project. This memo outlines findings from the Market Feasibility Subcommittee.

The Market Feasibility Subcommittee recognized the significance and potential of this project to establish Portland as a premiere destination for the performing arts, driving substantial economic growth and strengthening the city's arts and culture economy.

The Market Feasibility Subcommittee was tasked with answering two fundamental questions:

1. Can Portland support two venues with the production capabilities to accommodate Broadway performances?
2. What size performing arts venues are needed in the city?

The subcommittee met three times for two hours each. The first meeting on Tuesday, Sept. 17, included Chariti Montez (Office of Arts & Culture), Sarah Schwarz (PSU Foundation), Karen Whitman (Halprin Landscape Conservancy). The meeting time was used to determine topics of discussion, a list of attendees to invite to future meetings, the need for professional assistance, and the need for immediate outreach to arts groups. The group mutually agreed to invite Metro and Portland's Centers for the Arts Leadership, Broadway Across America, and the Portland's Resident Companies. The second and third meetings on Monday, Sept. 23, and Wednesday, Sept. 25 included:

- Chariti Montez, Director, Office of Arts & Culture

- Craig Stroud, Interim General Manager of Visitor Venues, Metro
- Brian Wilson, Executive Director, Portland's Centers for the Arts, Metro
- Rachael Lembo, Deputy Director, Portland's Centers for the Arts, Metro
- Rich Jaffe, CEO, Broadway Across America
- Anne Francis, Vice President, West Coast, Broadway Across America
- Shane Jewell, Executive Director, Oregon Ballet Theatre
- Sue Dixon, General Director, Portland Opera
- Anna Labykina, Director of Production, Portland Opera
- Tracy Wenckus, General Manager Broadway in Portland, Portland Opera
- Isaac Thompson, President and CEO, Oregon Symphony
- Siri Grubb, Executive Assistant and Board Liaison, Oregon Symphony
- Karen Hill, Director of Production, Oregon Children's Theatre
- Bill Blake, Director, AMS Planning & Research
- Sarah Schwarz, President and CEO, PSU Foundation
- Dr. Leroy Bynum, Jr., Dean, College of Arts, Portland State University
- Karen Whitman, Executive Director, Halprin Landscape Conservancy

### **Need for a Market Feasibility Analysis**

The resounding conclusion from these discussions was the need for further information in the form of a Market Feasibility Analysis (MFA). Further, given the importance of arts and culture and the creative economy in Portland, the group recommends an MFA be conducted before any decision is made on whether to renovate the existing Keller, construct a new Broadway-capable venue, or do both. It is also highly recommended to include operational model recommendations in an MFA.

### Components of the Project Informed by an MFA

Completion of an MFA would allow for data-informed decisions around the size and scope of the project, allowing for rightsizing of potential venues before design and construction. Some of those critical data points would include:

- Market demand and operational functionality: the MFA would inform how each venue would function with the other to allow for a coordinated approach.
- Amount of seating: Rightsizing the number of seats for each venue is amongst the most critically important aspects of any future project.
- Financial feasibility of construction and operation: the MFA would consider the funding needed to construct and/or renovate the venues and would also consider the cost of operations. Evaluation of the short- and long-term costs of this venture will be critical for venue managers and user groups.

### **Scope of a Market Feasibility Analysis**

The subcommittee worked collaboratively to define a scope for an MFA for performing arts venues in Portland. The scope should include:

- Defining the Portland Market to determine the regional draw.

- Considering market demand from both the perspective of audiences and the perspective of performing arts organizations and presenters, including current and future market demand.
- Evaluating the market supply by analyzing current and planned performing arts venues in Portland, including a potential outdoor venue at Waterfront Park and the new Live Nation and AEG Presents venues in permitting.

The outcomes of the analysis will inform recommendations on the ideal seating capacity and operational model for each of the venues being considered in the Future of Keller project.

- **Comprehensive Evaluation of Market Feasibility**

In addition to the deliverables outlined above, the MFA should continue community and stakeholder engagement to address the following critical questions:

- What are the barriers to growth for legacy arts organizations?
- Can Portland attract, keep, and grow the level of talent and skilled and union labor required to sustain performing arts venues?
- Is there demand in Portland for two large-scale productions at the same time?
- What happens if market analysis says Portland cannot support two venues?
- What does the arts ecosystem need in Portland? (Examples: housing, rehearsal space, professional space, large enough stages, other activation spaces, etc.)

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The subcommittee recognizes the potential of this project to elevate arts and culture experiences for all Portlanders and to be a catalytic force in the revitalization of downtown. Because of the importance of this project, it is recommended that a complete, comprehensive Market Feasibility Analysis be conducted with haste to allow for data informed decision making and to accommodate next steps including funding and sequencing.