

The Union for Contemporary Art Community Engagement and Impact Report

Voices & Vision Theatre & Performing Arts



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FROM THE DESK OF THE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Dear North Omaha Community,

It is with great pride and gratitude that I present to you the Voices & Vision Community Engagement and Impact Report—a document that reflects the heart of our community and serves as a blueprint for the future of the Shirley Tyree Theatre and The Union for Contemporary Art’s Theater and Performing Arts programming.

This project was undertaken with a singular goal: to listen, learn, and honor the voices of North Omaha. Over the course of public forums, listening sessions, and an online survey, we heard from many of you —artists, residents, elders, and youth. Your feedback, ideas, and stories have been invaluable in shaping a vision that is thoughtful, inclusive, and rooted in the rich cultural legacy of our community.

I want to personally thank everyone who participated in this journey —those who attended our sessions, completed the survey, and lent their voices to this critical conversation. Your input has been instrumental, and I assure you that your voices have been heard. This report will guide us as we grow and expand our theater and performing arts offerings in a way that is not only meaningful and impactful but also deeply reflective of North Omaha’s unique history and resilience.

The Shirley Tyree Theatre holds immense potential to become a vibrant space for storytelling, collaboration, and creativity—one that brings generations together and celebrates the diversity and brilliance of our community. Together, we will create programs that represent the best of North Omaha, ensuring that the arts continue to thrive as a cornerstone of our cultural identity.

Thank you for trusting us with your voices, your stories, and your hopes for the future. We look forward to building upon this foundation in partnership with each of you.

With gratitude and hope,

Ms. Lakesha Green

Executive Director



Dear North Omaha Community,

On behalf of the Board of Directors of the Union for Contemporary Art, it is my privilege to present the following report on community engagement and impact, *Voices & Visions*. This document embodies the collective contributions of Union Staff, Executive Leadership, the Board, and most importantly both Key Stakeholders and the broader community that we serve. The intent of collating these many acclamations and criticisms is to chart a course for the future of the Shirley Tyree Theatre and the Union's theater and performing arts programming.



Voices and Visions reflects our commitment to our core values; Community, Artists, Justice, Accessibility, Collaboration, and Dialogue. With these values in mind, we engaged in this process of listening deeply to honor the voices of our community. The process integrated quantitative and qualitative findings from public forums, listening sessions, and an online survey. The time, stories, and insights of so many of you have been collated into the following pages.

I want to say thank you to everyone who has been a part of this process thus far. You contributed glowing praise at times. At other times you contributed biting criticism. We needed both. As you review the findings of this report you will see that we're only at the beginning. The end of the document outlines (a) the immediate next steps and (b) the long-term initiatives which we will take.

I'm grateful for your grace and support as we go through this journey. I'm so proud of the good work the Union has done in its short existence. Outlined in this document are critical next steps that make me even more excited for what we will create together. Together, we will build on the foundation of our work, creating a future where the arts continue to thrive, bring us closer as a community, and inspire positive social change.

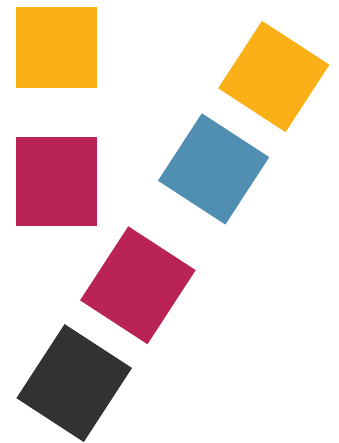
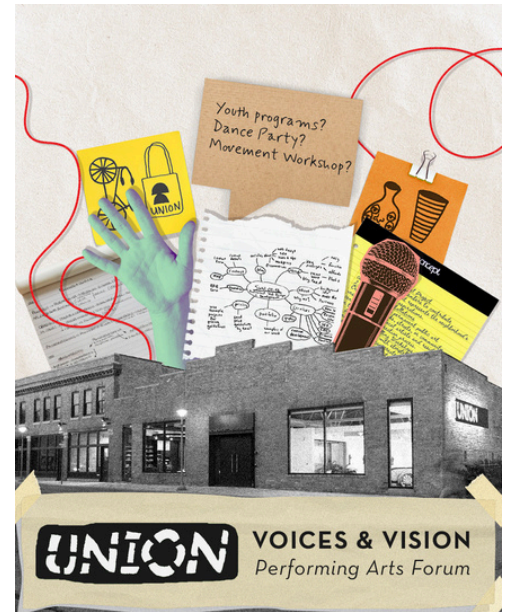
Sincerely,

Kene Okigbo, PLA, ASLA

Board Chair

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



VOICES & VISION COMMUNITY IMPACT AND ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

The Voices & Vision Community Impact and Engagement initiative, spearheaded by The Union for Contemporary Art, is a strategic effort to deepen its connection with the North Omaha community by reimagining its theater and arts programming. This initiative builds upon the rich cultural legacy of North Omaha, a historically vibrant hub for Black culture and the arts, celebrated for its jazz icons of "The Deuce." Overcoming decades of disinvestment, The Union seeks to honor this heritage while addressing evolving community needs. The project captured insights from diverse stakeholders, including artists, residents, staff, and board members through community listening sessions, forums, and focus groups. This collaborative approach ensures that The Union's programming reflects the community's values and aspirations while fostering cultural preservation and equity.

Feedback revealed several key themes. Community engagement and transparency emerged as critical needs, with participants calling for consistent, clear communication and establishing community advisory councils to enhance trust and inclusivity. Transparent decision-making processes were highlighted as essential for fostering sustained collaboration with the North Omaha community. Honoring history and cultural context was also a central theme, emphasizing capturing and celebrating North Omaha's cultural identity and the stories of its elders. Participants urged the Union to ensure that the Shirley Tyree theater programming authentically reflects the area's historical and cultural legacy. The Shirley Tyree Theater is the creative home for performing arts programming at The Union for Contemporary Art. Opened in 2023, the theater is a space for community gathering, storytelling, and performance in the cultural heart of North Omaha. The original and continued intent of developing The Union's Performing Arts programming is dedicated to developing local talent and presenting thought-provoking stories of the African diaspora.



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



VOICES & VISION COMMUNITY IMPACT AND ENGAGEMENT PROJECT

To achieve long-term success, financial sustainability, and targeted marketing and outreach were underscored as priorities. Suggestions included developing a diversified funding model through ticket sales, workshops, venue rentals, and partnerships while maintaining affordability to ensure accessibility for all community members. Strategic outreach and marketing campaigns were recommended to increase visibility and engagement, particularly among underserved populations. Participants also encouraged partnerships with regional and national artists to inspire local talent and expand The Union's impact.

High-Level Recommendations


- Strengthen Community Relationships: Establish a community advisory council and host regular forums to foster trust, transparency, and collaborative decision-making.
- Preserve and Honor Cultural Legacy: Partner with local historians and organizations to document and showcase North Omaha's rich cultural stories through theater programming.
- Expand Accessibility: Develop workshops, training, and mentorship programs to support local Black artists and foster intergenerational collaboration.
- Ensure Financial Resilience: Create a diversified funding model that balances accessibility with sustainability through ticket sales, workshops, rentals, and partnerships.
- Enhance Marketing and Outreach: Implement targeted campaigns to engage underserved populations and build connections with regional and national artists.

By integrating community feedback and prioritizing equity and inclusivity, Voices & Vision solidifies The Union for Contemporary Art's role as a catalyst for cultural preservation, community engagement, and social change in the North Omaha community.



INTRODUCTION

PROJECT BACKGROUND & OVERVIEW



The Union for Contemporary Art, as part of its 2024 Strategic Plan, launched the "Union Voices & Vision" Community Impact and Engagement Project, a bold initiative to strengthen its connection with the North Omaha community. This project underscores the Union's commitment to fostering inclusivity and relevance in its program offerings by prioritizing direct community input. Designed to refresh and update its arts programming, "Union Voices & Vision" focuses on creating impactful programs, increasing awareness, and broadening engagement to include a diverse array of community members and stakeholders. The initiative also emphasizes the importance of financial sustainability to ensure the longevity and accessibility of the Union's offerings. Led by Executive Director Lakesha Green, the project places a special spotlight on the organization's performing arts program founded in 2016—but with a particular focus on adding the newly built Shirley Tyree Theater in 2024. The Shirley Tyree Theater development project was developed to honor the black theater community and foster and promote diversity, equity, and inclusion while reflecting the unique cultural needs of North Omaha.

However, the launch of this initiative coincided with a period of organizational transition, which saw significant pushback from Black theater professionals in the community following an unexpected shift in staffing. This development underscored the importance of trust-building and transparency within the Union's community relationships. Despite these challenges, the strategic groundwork for "Union Voices & Vision" positions the organization to move forward with intentionality and purpose. The project serves as a vital opportunity to address concerns, rebuild confidence, and create programs that resonate deeply with the community, fostering a shared vision for a thriving, inclusive cultural hub in North Omaha.



ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY & METHODOLOGY

METHODOLOGY & APPROACH

The project involved a comprehensive engagement strategy, including community surveys, public forums, and focus groups, to gather stakeholder insights and input. By integrating this feedback into program planning and execution, the Union aims to create a dynamic and responsive arts environment that meets the evolving needs of its community.

Intended Outcomes: UNION Voices & Vision will result in a more informed, inclusive, and engaged community, with programs that are directly shaped by the voices and experiences of its participants. The project will also support the Union's goal of financial sustainability, ensuring that its programs continue to thrive and serve the community effectively.

Stakeholder Groups: General public, local community artists, local community theatre and performing arts professionals, Union board and executive leadership, Union staff members and volunteers

Engagement Tools and Techniques: Online and paper surveys developed and disseminated by Union staff, facilitated community forum, facilitated community listening sessions, facilitated focus groups with board, staff, key stakeholders, and one-to-one interviews

Project Timeline: September 1, 2024-November 30th, 2024

KEY PROJECT GOALS

Increase Community Awareness:

Enhance understanding and visibility of the Union's programs within the community to encourage broader participation and support.

Expand Programmatic Opportunities:

Integrate diverse community members, volunteers, and external stakeholders into the Union's programming to enrich the organization's offerings and foster a more inclusive environment.

Utilize Feedback for Improvement:

Employ program evaluations and community feedback to continuously refine and improve program design and development, ensuring that all initiatives are aligned with community needs and preferences.

Ensure Financial Sustainability:

Develop and implement strategies that guarantee the long-term financial stability of Union programs, enabling sustained impact and continued community engagement.

KEY FINDING

THEMES AND TRENDS

The **Voices and Vision Community Engagement Project** revealed critical themes through diverse data collection and dialogue, highlighting the priorities and aspirations of the North Omaha community. These themes underline the importance of fostering a strong, inclusive connection between the Union for Contemporary Art and the community it serves while emphasizing the need for culturally relevant and accessible programming

Community Engagement and Inclusivity emerged as a central theme, with participants stressing the need for greater involvement of local residents in theater and arts programming. While the Union is already a cultural hub, many residents remain unaware of its offerings, creating a gap between its potential impact and its current reach. Accessible and visible programming is key to bridging this divide, ensuring the community feels represented and engaged in every aspect of the organization's work.



Another critical theme is **Honoring the Legacy and History of the Local Community**. Participants underscored the importance of integrating the rich history of North Omaha into the Union's theater program. This includes fostering intergenerational spaces where older and younger artists can collaborate, ensuring cultural practices are preserved while nurturing innovative expressions that reflect the community's evolving identity.

Balancing Expansion with Community Focus was a recurring point of discussion. While there is excitement about the theater program's potential growth, participants emphasized the need to prioritize the local community's needs. Expansion should complement, not overshadow, the Union's core mission to serve and uplift its immediate community.



Concerns around **Resource Accessibility and Representation** further highlighted the importance of removing barriers to participation. Outreach efforts must target economically disadvantaged areas, with financial support mechanisms like scholarships ensuring programs remain inclusive. Equally vital is **diversifying staffing** to reflect the community's demographics, reinforcing the Union's commitment to representation.



Finally, themes of **Inclusivity and Diversity, Conflict Resolution, and Resilience** emphasized the Union's role as a platform for showcasing diverse perspectives and stories, particularly from marginalized groups such as Black and queer communities. Participants also acknowledged the challenges that come with growth and change, calling for proactive strategies to navigate conflict and strengthen the Union's resilience.



KEY COMMUNITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Community Engagement and Inclusivity

- Increased outreach to raise awareness of Union programs among Black residents living in close proximity to the Union
- Accessible and visible programming tailored to the community culture
- Initiatives that actively involve the community in decision-making processes.

Honoring the Legacy and History of the Local Community

- Programs that acknowledge North Omaha's cultural history.
- Creation of intergenerational spaces for artistic collaboration.
- Opportunities to preserve and celebrate cultural traditions.

Balancing Expansion with Community Focus

- Strategic growth that prioritizes the needs of the local community.
- Programs that maintain a strong connection to the Union's core mission.

Resource Accessibility and Representation

- Expanded outreach to economically disadvantaged areas.
- Financial support mechanisms, such as continued use of scholarships and reduced-cost programming.
- Diverse staffing and leadership that reflects the community's demographics.

Inclusivity and Diversity

- Programs showcasing diverse perspectives and marginalized voices, including Black and queer communities, with a particular focus on contemporary Black theatre
- Arts initiatives that go beyond traditional narratives to represent broader experiences in particular the Black experience of residents in and around North Omaha



KEY COMMUNITY NEEDS AND PRIORITIES

Conflict Resolution and Resilience

- Development of proactive strategies to address challenges related to organizational growth.
- Creation of spaces for open dialogue and conflict resolution.

Empowering Community Voices and Storytelling

- Platforms for local artists to share their work and develop skills.
- Workshops, mentorships, and playwriting programs for community members.
- Opportunities to showcase local talent in theater productions.

Early Exposure and Youth Involvement

- Youth-focused arts programs and continued use of discounted pricing to ensure accessibility.
- Partnerships with schools and community organizations to engage young people.
- Initiatives fostering early exposure to the arts to nurture lifelong appreciation.

Collaboration and Partnership

- Building networks with local arts organizations and grassroots initiatives.
- Establishing collaborative projects to amplify visibility and mutual support.

Notes:


- Space open for Community Performances
- Partnerships with Community Orgs |
- Network with Artists in Community

- Create space for Artists who are not already part of the Union network
- The Union to be the hub to be able to re-convene and utilize talents within the community

- More Outreach to engage the BIPOC Community.
- Need more intergenerational support not just for youth

DATA ANALYSIS

QUANTITATIVE DATA: COMMUNITY ARTS THEATRE SURVEY RESPONSES



In an effort to align offerings with the needs of North Omaha residents and develop performing arts programming informed by the members of this community, the **Union Voices & Vision Community Performing Arts Survey** gathered feedback on the exploration of opportunities to activate The Union for Contemporary Art's Shirley Tyree Theater. Community stakeholder input is crucial in shaping these programs to best meet the needs and interests of the community. The survey was designed to gather community preferences, needs, and ideas. A total of 58 responses were collected.

The anonymous survey captured diverse community insights, with responses spanning:

- **Demographics:** Intergenerational with ages 19–65+, predominantly female, representing 18 zip codes, including 13.3% from the Union's own 68110 and 15.8% from adjacent zip code 68111 (captured via paper survey at a neighborhood event)
- **Employment Status:** 70.4% employed, with students (9.3%) and retirees (13%) also represented in the online survey
- **Arts Participation:** 56.6% of online respondents are currently involved in arts or cultural activities, and 26.4% participate occasionally.
- **Interest in Performing Arts:** 92.6% of online respondents showed a strong interest in community-based performing arts programs.
- **Program Preferences:** High demand exists amongst online survey respondents for community theater productions (66.7%), professional performances (63%), and youth-focused education and classes (63%), with 51.9% expressing interest in playwriting and scriptwriting workshops.

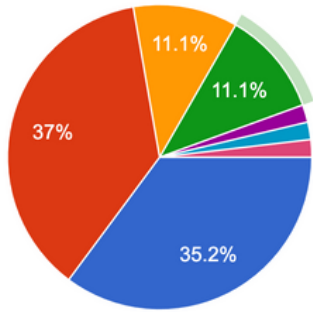
Key findings on accessibility and engagement include:

- **Scheduling Conflicts:** 74.5% indicated that program timing affects attendance, with a preference for evening sessions (64.7%) on weekends (62.7%).
- **Frequency:** Monthly programming is preferred by 50%.
- **Awareness & Access:** 68.6% cited lack of awareness as a barrier, indicating a need for improved marketing communication efforts, while 41.2% noted cost concerns, suggesting the need for scholarships or sponsorships

Recommendations: Respondents suggested flexible scheduling (66.7%), cost reduction or scholarships (52.1%), and improved marketing (52.1%) to enhance program accessibility.

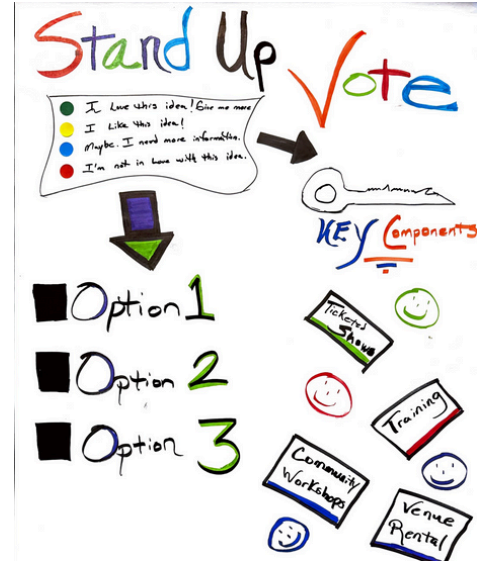
THE UNION COMMUNITY PERFORMING ARTS SURVEY

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY DATA



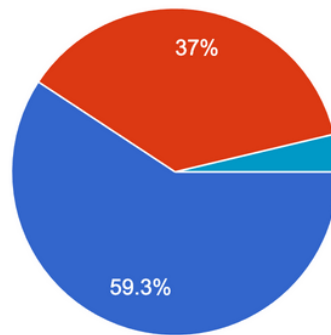
RESPONDENT AGE

- 19-35 yrs
- 36-50 yrs
- 51-65 yrs
- Over 65 yrs
- 70
- All ages, really.



*Empowering
+ local
performers
Project management
+ local philanthropy*

*I think the initial idea
of what The Shirley
Tyree theater was
intended for should be
prioritized & made
important.
-Just B*



- Female
- Male
- Transgender
- Non-binary
- Prefer not to say
- Prefer to self identify

GENDER



THE UNION COMMUNITY PERFORMING ARTS SURVEY

QUANTITATIVE SURVEY DATA



Community Performing Arts Survey

We are exploring opportunities to activate The Union for Contemporary Art's Shirley Tyree Theater by developing performing arts programming informed by our North Omaha community. This survey is designed to help us tailor our offerings to serve our community better.

Demographic Information

1. Zip Code: 68110 68111 68112 68104 Other: _____
2. Age: 19-35 36-50 51-65 Over 65 Other: _____
3. Gender: Female Male Transgender Non-binary
 Prefer not to say Prefer to self identify: _____
4. What is your current occupation or primary role?
 Student Employed Unemployed Retired Caregiver
 Prefer to self identify: _____
5. Do you currently participate in any arts or cultural activities?
 Yes No Occasionally

Interest and Participation

6. How interested are you in Performing Arts programs in your community?
 Very interested Somewhat interested Neutral Not very interested
 Not interested at all
7. What types of Performing Arts programs would you like to see? (Select all that apply)
 Youth education and classes Adult acting and performance workshops
 Professional theater performances Community theater productions
 Playwriting and scriptwriting workshops Theater arts for seniors
 Specialized workshops (e.g., improv, stage combat)
 Other (please specify): _____

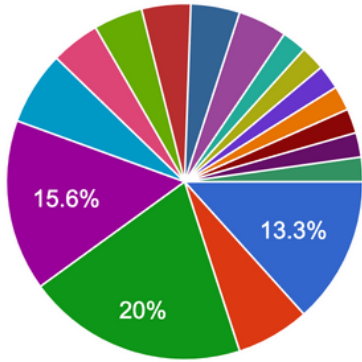


8. What is the best time of day for you to attend performing arts programs?
 Morning Afternoon Evening Weekends No preference
8. How frequently would you like performing arts programs to be offered?
 Weekly Monthly Quarterly Annually
- Barriers and Accessibility**
9. What barriers might prevent you from participating in programs? (Select all that apply)
 Lack of transportation Cost of programs Scheduling conflicts
 Accessibility issues (e.g., physical access) Lack of awareness about programs
 Language barriers Other (please specify): _____
10. What would make it easier for you to participate in these programs? (Select all that apply)
 Reduced cost or scholarships Transportation assistance Childcare options
 Programs in multiple languages Flexible scheduling Accessible venues
 More information about programs Other (please specify): _____

Feedback and Suggestions

11. What specific types of theater productions or workshops would you like to see in our community? _____
12. Do you have any other ideas or suggestions for how we can improve or offer Performing Arts programs in our community? _____
13. Please provide any additional comments or concerns you have regarding Performing Arts in our community: _____

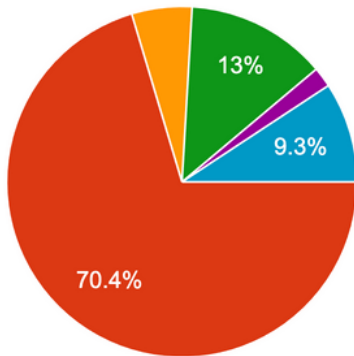
Thank you for your participation! If you are interested in volunteering or participating in the planning of our performing arts programming, please contact Lakesha Green by email at lakesha@u-ca.org.



- 68110
- 68111
- 68112
- 68104
- 68102
- 68132
- 68164
- 68137

▲ 1/3 ▼

ZIP CODE DATA



- Student
- Employed
- Unemployed
- Retired
- Caregiver
- Prefer to self-identify

EMPLOYMENT DATA



QUALITATIVE DATA

PUBLIC FORUM, LISTENING SESSION, FOCUS GROUPS AND INTERVIEWS

SUMMARY OF POSITIVE FEEDBACK

Across its public forums, focus groups, and listening sessions, The Union for Contemporary Art received widespread praise for its dedication to uplifting local artists and fostering a vibrant arts community. **Participants particularly valued the Union's commitment to equitable practices, with community members noting that it is the only organization in the area paying Black artists a fair wage for their work** (Community Listening Session). The Union's ability to create impactful arts programs and expand engagement efforts was also commended, reflecting its strong alignment with the community's needs and aspirations (Public Forum).

The Union's positive atmosphere and inclusive culture were frequently highlighted. Staff members shared their love for working at the Union, emphasizing the supportive environment and collaborative energy (Staff Forum #2). Additionally, the Union was recognized for its leadership in advocating for smaller arts groups, serving as a vital resource hub for diverse artistic disciplines under one roof (Board, Leadership Staff, and Key Stakeholder Focus Group). This mix of gallery art, performances, and residencies demonstrated the organization's strength in offering comprehensive programming that appeals to a wide range of community members.

The Union's recent community engagement workshop efforts also garnered praise for their immediate impact in increasing community engagement (Board, Leadership Staff, and Key Stakeholder Focus Group). **Community members expressed excitement about the Union's potential to serve as a pivotal space for theater and performing arts in North Omaha, fostering local talent and providing opportunities for both young and adult artists** (Community Listening Session). This dual focus on talent cultivation and accessibility positions the Union as a cornerstone for artistic and cultural growth in the region.

Finally, the Union's role in preserving and sharing the history of North Omaha through arts programming was widely celebrated (Board, Leadership Staff, and Key Stakeholder Focus Group). **By blending cultural preservation with innovative programming, the Union continues to solidify its reputation as a leader in the arts, ensuring that the rich legacy of the community is honored while creating opportunities for future generations.** These positive sentiments underscore the Union's critical role in fostering creativity, collaboration, and cultural pride in North Omaha.



INTERNAL FINDINGS

BOARD, EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP, KEY STAKEHOLDER AND STAFF VOICES

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Challenges

- **Community Engagement and Communication**
 - Need to maintain transparency and clear communication with the community.
 - There is a need for a consistent and organized approach to engaging community members, including the use of advisory boards or digital platforms for feedback.
 - Limited targeted marketing and outreach efforts, particularly in reaching underserved community segments.
- **Programming and Scheduling**
 - Scheduling conflicts for community events due to a lack of coordination, underscoring the need for a shared community calendar.
 - Limited capacity to host frequent events while balancing the demands of ongoing programs.
- **Sustainability and Support**
 - Challenges in sustaining the theater program through existing resources and funding.
 - Insufficient equitable opportunities and compensation for local artists within the greater Omaha area.
 - Lack of mechanisms to support long-term artist development, such as fellowships or residency programs specific to theater and performing arts professionals.
- **Historical and Cultural Preservation**
 - Risk of losing important cultural stories and legacies of North Omaha if not actively preserved.
 - Need for partnerships and resources to effectively document and share community history.
- **Trust and Relationships**
 - Strained relationships with some community members and organizations that require healing and rebuilding.
 - Difficulty in engaging key advocates and volunteers to foster trust and promote programs.



INTERNAL FINDINGS

BOARD, EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP, KEY STAKEHOLDER AND STAFF VOICES

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Opportunities

- **Community Leadership**
 - Strengthening the Union's role as a leader and advocate for smaller arts organizations.
 - Building equitable opportunities for local artists and ensuring inclusive programming.
- **Enhanced Programming**
 - Exploring regular events like "First Saturday" gatherings to foster community involvement and accommodate artists' schedules.
 - Introducing fellowships, residencies, and partnerships to nurture local talent and sustain the theater program.
 - Attracting regional and national artists and playwrights to inspire and elevate local creative expression.
- **Improved Communication and Marketing**
 - Leveraging advisory boards, newsletters, and digital platforms for increased community feedback and participation.
 - Implementing targeted marketing campaigns to better connect with diverse segments of the community.
- **Cultural Preservation**
 - Partnering with local organizations to capture and share stories from North Omaha elders.
 - Developing initiatives to highlight and honor the historical and cultural significance of the community.
- **Partnerships and Expansion**
 - Collaborating with organizations like the Empowerment Network to create shared resources, such as a community arts calendar.
 - Engaging with the local airport and other regional partners to attract visitors and integrate the theater program into the broader cultural landscape.
- **Relationship Building**
 - Rekindling partnerships and fostering relationships with key stakeholders and community advocates.
 - Empowering volunteers to act as liaisons and promote the Union's programs effectively.



INTERNAL FINDINGS

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP AND STAFF FOCUS GROUP

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Challenges

- **Program Dependency and Silos**
 - Past challenges arose from the theater program being heavily tied to one individual, leading to a perception of neglect after their departure.
 - Limited opportunities for cross-program engagement created a siloed approach to programming, reducing collaboration across departments
 - Limited cross pollination between programs due to scheduling issues in particular the theater program operating largely after hours during evening and weekends
- **Resource and Training Gaps**
 - Lack of technical expertise in managing the theater space and equipment was identified as a significant issue.
 - Inconsistent presence and trust-building with performers and backstage staff created operational challenges.
- **Trust and Community Relationships**
 - A brief history of strained relationships with persons of color in the community led to feelings of mistrust and a perception of insufficient support. This strain was felt largely by the Black community theatre professionals
 - Staff acknowledged the emotional toll of past challenges and highlighted the need for healing and rebuilding relationships.
- **Communication and Feedback**
 - Insufficient communication and transparency hindered trust-building with both the community and internal stakeholders.
 - Limited proactive data gathering and visibility in the community reduced opportunities for engagement and feedback.
- **Event and Program Structure**
 - The need for improved scheduling and structured support systems for theater events was identified as a gap.
 - Balancing diverse program elements, including shows and workshops, while ensuring alignment with community input, presented a challenge.



INTERNAL FINDINGS

EXECUTIVE LEADERSHIP AND STAFF FOCUS GROUP

OPPORTUNITIES & CHALLENGES

Opportunities

- **Strengthening Program Vision**
 - Providing new hires with comprehensive communication tools and showcasing past promotional materials can help unify the team around the theater program's vision.
 - Developing structured support systems and improved event scheduling to enhance program delivery and efficiency.
- **Enhancing Resources and Training**
 - Hiring or training staff with technical expertise in theater operations and equipment to support seamless program execution.
 - Building consistent relationships with performers and backstage staff to foster trust and reliability.
- **Rebuilding Community Trust**
 - Focusing on transparent and honest communication to rebuild trust, particularly with persons of color in the community.
 - Engaging in trust-building activities and ensuring visible, consistent support for all stakeholders.
- **Improving Communication Strategies**
 - Implementing proactive data gathering tools, such as surveys, to collect community feedback and align programming with local needs.
 - Increasing community visibility through outreach efforts and collaborative initiatives.
- **Expanding Program Diversity**
 - Balancing program offerings to include a mix of shows, workshops, and training sessions informed by community preferences.
 - Encouraging cross-program engagement to break down silos and foster a collaborative atmosphere within the Union.
- **Fostering Team Unity**
 - Supporting staff in processing past challenges to ensure a unified team that is focused on the theater program's success.
 - Promoting healing and collaboration within the team to create a positive environment for new hires and program growth.



RECOMMENDATIONS



SHORT-TERM RECOMMENDATIONS

- **Community Engagement and Transparency**
 - Establish a temporary community advisory group to guide immediate programming decisions and provide feedback.
 - Develop a communication plan to inform the public about changes in the theater program, emphasizing transparency and responsiveness.
 - Launch a social media campaign to increase awareness of upcoming events and programs, addressing feedback about lack of visibility.
- **Program Development**
 - Organize a “Community Open House” or “Listening Day” at the Shirley Tyree Theater to gather additional community feedback and build excitement for future programming.
 - Pilot a small-scale monthly event series, such as “First Saturdays,” to foster community engagement and gauge interest in different program types.
- **Internal Enhancements**
 - Provide immediate training for staff on transparency and communication strategies to rebuild trust with the community.
 - Designate a staff liaison to oversee rapid response to community concerns and feedback.

LONG-TERM SUSTAINABLE RECOMMENDATIONS

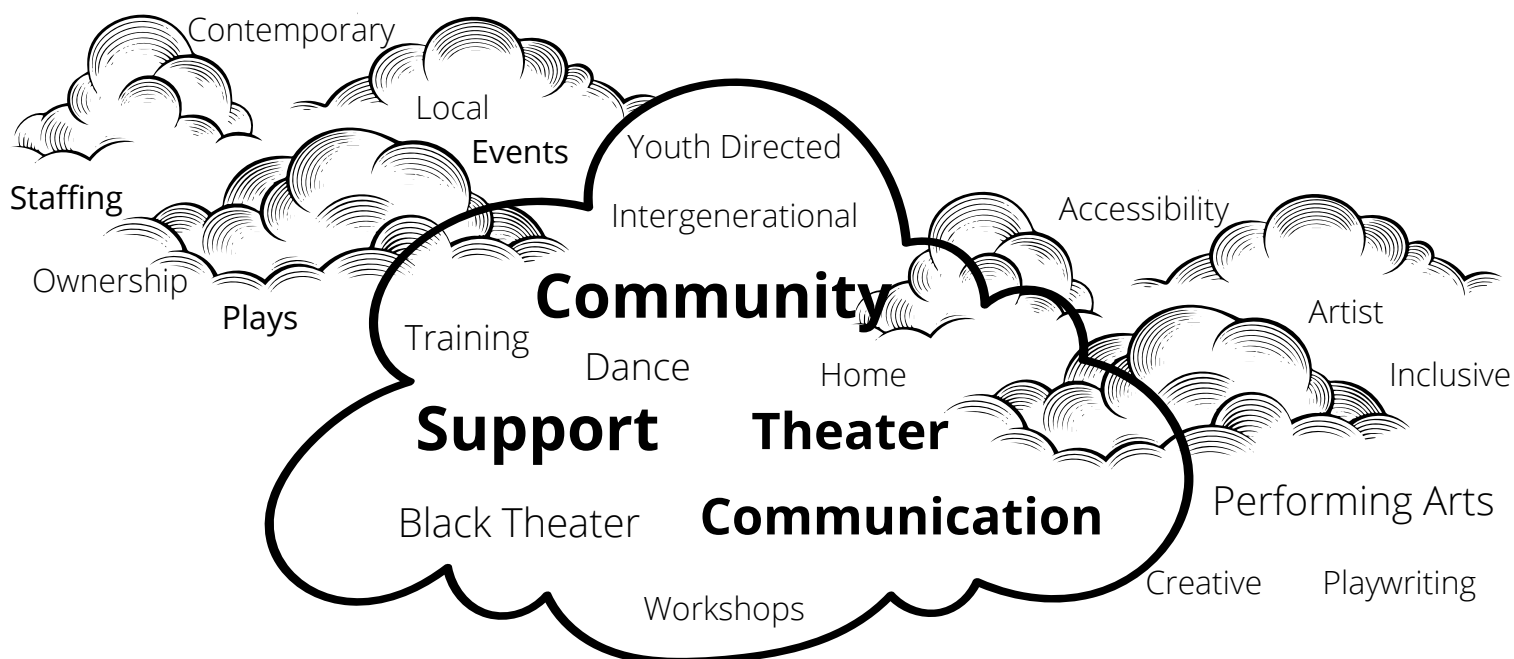
- **Community Engagement and Cultural Preservation**
 - Formalize a permanent community advisory council to ensure ongoing dialogue and input into theater and arts programming.
 - Partner with local historians to document and integrate North Omaha’s cultural history into theater programs, including plays and workshops.
 - Develop intergenerational programs that bring together older and younger artists to ensure the preservation of cultural traditions.
- **Program and Resource Development**
 - Continue to expand fellowship or residency programs for local Black and marginalized artists to support their growth and foster community ownership.
 - Create a tiered funding model to maintain affordability for the use of space, including scholarships, sliding-scale pricing, and sponsorship opportunities.
 - Expand programming to include scriptwriting workshops, youth theater productions, and contemporary Black theater showcases.
- **Organizational Capacity Building**
 - Invest in technical training for staff to ensure smooth theater operations and build internal expertise.
 - Develop a strategic hiring plan to ensure diverse representation in staffing and leadership.
 - Implement a data-driven feedback system, such as regular surveys and focus groups, to track community satisfaction and program success.
- **Marketing and Outreach**
 - Develop a targeted marketing plan to reach underserved populations, focusing on digital platforms using video to showcase the Unions programs, local events, and partnerships with community organizations.
 - Collaborate with local schools and community groups to create arts education initiatives, increasing youth engagement.
- **Financial Sustainability**
 - Establish a diversified funding model, combining ticket sales, venue rentals, workshop fees, and external partnerships.
 - Pursue grant opportunities and sponsorships to support inclusive programming and community access.

RECOMMENDATIONS

PARTNERSHIP OPPORTUNITIES

- **Local Organizations**
 - **Local Arts Organizations:** Collaborate on the creation of a community arts calendar to prevent scheduling conflicts and enhance visibility.
 - **Creative Economy:** Align efforts to revitalize North 24th Street, integrating arts programming into broader economic development initiatives.
 - **Arts and Community Foundations:** Explore grant opportunities and joint initiatives for cultural preservation and community development.
- **Education and Youth Engagement**
 - Partner with **local schools** and organizations like Boys & Girls Clubs to offer youth-focused theater workshops and productions.
 - Work with local colleges and universities to provide internships, mentorship programs, and student-led productions at the Union.
- **Cultural Preservation**
 - Collaborate with academic institutions or community organizations to document and share North Omaha's cultural history through theater programming.
 - Partner with **cultural museums** to integrate historical content into theatrical productions and exhibitions.
- **Regional and National Artists**
 - Develop partnerships with regional and national Black artists and playwrights to bring inspirational performances and workshops to the Union.
 - Leverage partnerships with touring companies or other regional theaters to diversify programming and expand the Union's audience base.

WORD CLOUD



CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

ENGAGEMENT BARRIERS

- **Low Awareness of Programs:** Many community members reported being unaware of the Union's offerings, limiting engagement and attendance at events. This gap in visibility was a recurring theme across forums and surveys.
- **Historical Mistrust:** Strained relationships with certain segments of the community, particularly among Black theater professionals and community members, created barriers to re-engagement and trust-building efforts.
- **Logistical Challenges:**
 - Scheduling conflicts were frequently cited, with many respondents indicating that the timing of events impacted their ability to participate.
 - A lack of a coordinated community arts calendar exacerbated scheduling difficulties, creating overlaps with other local events.
 - Physical accessibility for economically disadvantaged groups remained a concern, including the cost of attendance and transportation.
- **Staff and Resource Limitations:** The Union faced internal challenges, including a lack of technical expertise and consistent staffing for theater operations, which hindered the smooth execution of events and programming.
- **Perception of Neglect:** The theater program's previous reliance on specific staff members resulted in feelings of neglect within the Black theater community when those individuals were no longer employed by the Union, which affected their strong connection to the Union.



CHALLENGES AND LIMITATIONS

LIMITATIONS OF DATA

- **Demographic Representation:**
 - While feedback was collected from a broad age range (19–65+), there were limited responses from certain demographics, including male participants and non-local community members, which could skew insights toward specific groups.
 - The survey data predominantly captured feedback from the 68110 and 68111 zip codes, potentially overlooking broader regional perspectives.
- **Survey Participation:**
 - Participation rates for online surveys were moderate, and paper survey responses from neighborhood events were not always comprehensive, leaving potential gaps in the data.
 - Certain subgroups, like retired individuals or those not actively involved in the arts, may have been underrepresented.
- **Subjectivity of Qualitative Data:**
 - Focus groups and listening sessions relied heavily on anecdotal insights, which, while valuable, are subjective and may not fully capture the diversity of opinions within the community.
 - Variability in facilitation styles across sessions could have influenced the depth and direction of participant feedback.
- **Timing of Feedback:**
 - Feedback was collected during a transitional period for the Union, which may have heightened community concerns and impacted the tone of responses.
 - Past conflicts, such as decisions not to be open for certain community events (e.g., a Juneteenth celebration), may have disproportionately influenced participants' perceptions.
- **Absence of Longitudinal Data:**
 - The project lacked comparative data from prior years, making it difficult to measure progress or identify trends over time.
 - Feedback mechanisms focused on immediate perceptions and preferences, offering limited insight into long-term needs or potential barriers.



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North Omaha Turnback Tax Grant
Whitmore Charitable Trust

Joy Ambition (Juneteenth JoyFest)
Melanin City Classics
Lewis & Clark National Historic Trail
Nebraska Poetry Society
NOMA (North Omaha Music and Arts)
Empowerment Network
Great Plains Theater Commons

COMMUNITY VOICES

We extend our heartfelt gratitude to all the community members who participated in our forums, listening sessions, and focus groups. Your time, insights, and stories have been invaluable to shaping the vision for a community theater that reflects and supports North Omaha. Your voices have provided critical guidance, ensuring that this project fosters creativity, inclusion, and opportunity for all. On behalf of The Union for Contemporary Art, thank you for your commitment to building a stronger, more vibrant community.

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