



CULTURAL CORE
BUDGET COMMITTEE MEETING
Tuesday, May 6th, 2025

Committee Members in Attendance: Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling, Spencer Lawson, Lia Summers, Grace Lin, Isaac Gonzalez, Seth Brown, Mohan Sudabattula, Felicia Baca, Matt Castillo

Committee Members Not in Attendance:

Cultural Core/Downtown Alliance Staff Present: Britney Helmers, Merinda Starnes, Jessica Thesing, Josh Jones, Kai Henriksen, Dee Brewer

Guests Present: Claudia Lyoaza

The meeting was called to order at **9:08 am**. **Spencer Lawson** initiated the roll. **Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling** made a motion to approve the minutes from January 14th, 2025 and **Isaac Gonzalez** seconded the motion.

Review of Public Comments

No public comments to review.

Current Business

Review FY26 Budget

Britney Helmers So we have shared the budget with everyone. Does everyone know where you can find it within the folder system? I figured I'd make it as easy as possible. So this year it's under Blocks, SLC, under our agendas, and then FY26 budget to be reviewed. I see that a lot of you are in there right now, so that's great. I figured I'd kind of just review this setup. It is the same from last year, but just showcasing this. So going left to right, we have Office and Admin, General Programming, General Marketing, and then we kind of get right into our programs. The Co-Create, Kiosk program, Steppin' On Main, Mariachi Festival, Visit Salt Lake Partnership, Locally Made, Locally Played, and Urban Plein Air. And on the whole right side, you'll see the total budget kind of separated out. The \$600,000, which is \$300,000 from the city and \$300,000

from the county. Other funding, foundation grants, and/or corporate sponsors. So you will kind of see this is how our accounting team looks at everything. What you'll see on the bottom here as well is a bunch of tabs. Anything in blue means that it is linked to a separate spreadsheet to make it a little bit easier on what you're looking at. "Other" is other funding that we're going after. So we are looking to really grow this program this year, and we are kind of going after some grants, going after a few opportunities. So you'll see ZAP funding, which is for Downtown SLC Presents. That is not a part of the Cultural Core. I just have it on here for other funding. The UDAM grant, the LDS Church grant, ACE grant, and then we are going after a program with Gallivan that is equating to about 75K. So you'll see in this other folder, we're going after an additional almost \$153,000 this year. On top of the 105K, that is showcased in our budget. So again, clicking through the tabs on the bottom, you've got Mariachi Festival. If you're interested in kind of looking at the overall breakdown of the entire program, feel free to kind of flip through this. You see what we're paying artists, what we're paying for our other partners. Matt is very familiar with this because we've been working with our other partners on this. Steppin' on Main, looking at our future programs. So the dates that we're programming, how much we're paying for artists, what we're putting into marketing for each individual program. So again, this all lays up into the big budget. Do you guys want me to go through every single program individually? Does that help or is it necessary? **Spencer Lawson** I mean, I was able to look at it. If anyone wants to go into detail we can. **Britney Helmers** Great. Okay. That's extremely helpful. But again, if you ever want to do this, this copy is in that FY26 budget to be approved. It's kind of exciting. I feel like we're growing quite a bit this year and looking at how we're building this, how we're pushing things forward. Go back to the big budget, please. One thing I kind of want to mention is last year we had lumped together general programming and general marketing. I split it out this year because as you guys know, and as the conversations have arisen, we're super excited to hire somebody to help us with social media. So we have that job out there. Probably not hiring until middle of June, July, again, because of the budget season, but really excited to start pushing that for all of these programs. There's also enough funding in general marketing that you see for that person to have content funding, right? We know that we can't just hire someone and not give them the proper tools for success. So they do have enough funding in there to create that content that we're really pushing. When we think about that person, we're excited to really collaborate and connect the programs that we're pushing, but the story of the art that we have here in Salt Lake City. So I know I keep kind of referring back to our Mariachi Festival, but what is the history of Mariachi in Salt Lake City? How do we tie that to the art? How do we tie that to the culture in downtown? How do we tie that to people and places here? And we want to tell that story quite a bit more. So then we can really answer, well, why are you doing a Mariachi Festival? And not because we're trying to bring more culture here. It's because we want to amplify their message and create visibility for them. So that's kind of my quick rundown and overview. You said you guys have kind of looked at it. I appreciate that. Any questions I can answer right off the bat? **Spencer Lawson** I do have one question. So we go all the way over to the right, total budget, we see the six from the city and the county, the 10 from foundation and the 30 from who's that corporate sponsor. **Britney Helmers** So that 30 is from Visit Salt Lake and you'll see that in the VSL partnership. So that lines up. We're working with them right now on that actual agreement and that contract. It's probably not going to be 30. It's probably going to be between I think it was 21. **Matt Castillo** So that's to help place buskers

at certain strategic times throughout the year and things like that. **Britney Helmers** You bet. So with that partnership, we hire between 45 and 60 buskers every single year, put them on the streets during the largest convention days and about 50 to 60% of that funding goes directly to the artists. So it is exciting. **Isaac Gonzalez** And on the other grants, are you guys still applying for them or? **Britney Helmers** Great question. So we have already applied for the UDAM grant. Our team Downtown SLC Presents did apply for the ZAP funding. We did apply for the LDS grant and we have already received it. We have already received the ACE grant and then the Lunch Bunch at Gallivan, which would actually be 47 days of activation and or programming at Gallivan on Tuesdays and Thursdays and programming on Wednesday evenings. We submitted that on Friday. So that is for 75K. **Matt Castillo** And that's funding from the Gallivan Center?

Britney Helmers That would be, yeah. So it would be from the CRA. And that would be to actually run the program. So we would also make additional revenue on that. **Matt Castillo** Yeah that's great. That's like a brown bag lunch type series or? **Britney Helmers** So they have food trucks during lunch hours every Tuesday, Thursday. And then what they want to do on Wednesday evenings is really create that density. So they did put out an RFQ request for qualification services and we did apply for that. We have been working with them on a program potentially like this. And they said, obviously due to city government, they need to send out the RFQ. So we are prepared with a budget. What would happen within that 75 K? Which is how we know that 47 days of activation. **Isaac Gonzalez** This is for sure they'd do this right? They have to. **Britney Helmers** So they put musicians on the stage for Tuesdays and Thursdays for their Lunch Bunch. It is quite underwhelming, shall we say? Anybody agree? **Dee Brewer** I agree.

Britney Helmers So we would like to create a whole new brand for that. We would like to work with the marketing. We have also said that this is not best suited for the main stage at Gallivan. So we are trying to intertwine a couple of our programs. One of our co-creates being creating little stages with Township and Range. If we could build a little stage at Main Street and Gallivan, then we could host the lunch bunch here. And then it would be a little bit more right size and people could hear that connection from the train stop, but also walking on the sidewalk. So we have ideas to right size it and make it a little bit cleaner. **Matt Castillo** I know this is maybe a little bit of a Pandora's box, but is there anything in here related to Open Streets? I know that that's a whole separate contract, but you can just think about how things are tying in. I assume a lot of this stuff would overlap with what is happening with Open Streets, which actually I don't know. **Britney Helmers** I love it. Loaded question. So Open Streets did go to a new contractor this year. We are coordinating with them on a couple things. We're working on a program. So a lot of our Co-Creates are actually going to line up at the same time Open Streets is happening. So our Co-Create program with Murray Symphony, Echoes of the Great Salt Lake, will line up with Open Streets. They will actually produce two events on June 25th, which is not Open Streets at that time, but it is within the vicinity. Our other Co-Create with Kelly Freshman will line up on Open Streets, and we're working to put that in the Vasilios Priskos' Walkway, which is the Regent Street alley. So that will line up with Open Streets. And then we are waiting to hear if Open Streets will also line up in September, and we will have other programming happening then. **Matt Castillo** So there's nothing in the budget like Open Streets specific that also stuff is going to be happening? **Britney Helmers** There is not. Things that we have already been planning and or programming, and then Open Streets was awarded, so it kind of is aligning. **Matt Castillo** Just out of curiosity do we know when Open Streets is

happening? **Felicia Baca** Every Friday and Saturday in June, 2pm to 2am. **Matt Castillo** Just in June though? Nothing in July through September? **Britney Helmers** It's potentially coming back in September as well. **Matt Castillo** And has the contractor been announced? **Britney Helmers** It is. It's designed by, Collaborative by Design. We are coordinating with them. They have asked quite a few questions. They have kind of been doing a bit of research and or outreach to us. **Josh, anything to add there? Josh Jones** We'll be doing a lot of lifting their message on our social media channels. We supported them on building a marketing plan. We helped them get up to speed on what Open Streets is. But it's their baby, we want them to be successful. **Matt Castillo** Ok that's helpful, thank you. **Spencer Lawson** So when we go back to that total budget column, is the 65k money we already have? So we're approving today's 705. **Britney Helmers** Yep, you got it. **Dee, Jessica, do you guys want to talk about the 65? Jessica Thesing** We have some funds that we are using to invest in the blocks. And part of that was in payroll. So traditionally, we've had to allocate some of our payroll for the work that DTA staff does for the Blocks. And we've now pulled that back and will be built for pro bono, I guess, donating that time for those staff hours, which frees up that cash that would have gone to payroll or programming or this new position. In addition to that, we actually use the figure of 150. So the difference between 150 and that 65 or 68 is actually cash that we'll infuse for programming. And that's actually this year and next year. **Felicia Baca** Can I ask one question about that? So was previously recorded as in kind, like it was payroll, like actual cash, like the donation of Josh's time? **Jessica Thesing** Yeah, so it wasn't recorded as in kind. It was just that way that we do accounting is if Josh is spending 40% of his time on the Blocks, and 40% of his time is actually the salaries allocated to the Blocks in payroll, we just pulled that back. So he's still doing the work for the Blocks. Kai is still doing the work for the Blocks, but we are not charging the Blocks for that time. So it's hard to kind of wrap your head around, but it's essentially freeing up that cash for that additional marketing person that Britney was talking about. **Felicia Baca** I'm just wondering about, you know, like in our budgets, we record kind of in-kind donated staff time, and I was trying to remember how that, and if we think that's important at some juncture in the way that like we do it with our budget map, where it's like an in-kind donation that we record. It's like an in and out, but it's not cash, so that might be a later conversation. **Jessica Thesing** I'm recording that. So I can provide that for, it's really easy to include that in your budget. **Matt Castillo** Yeah, I think, I mean it would make sense when you're presenting just a Downtown SLC Presents specific budget to have that. Because I think it's important to acknowledge that, and of course, I appreciate the Downtown Alliance for thinking creatively and figuring out how to, you know, free up more funds for this. That's great. Of course, whenever it's all within the Downtown Alliance, as a whole, it would be eliminated anyway. But I think it's valuable to acknowledge that additional support that the Downtown Alliance is... **Dee Brewer** It could be useful for future grants too to demonstrate a larger budget. **Jessica Thesing** We actually did do that, record it with ZAP that very same way. **Britney Helmers** I left 50 minutes on here, because I thought you guys would bombard me with questions here. So I do want to share a few other things. So in front of you, you guys do have a document that I wanted to share with you. Just what we are looking at for our key takeaways from this budget. I kind of mentioned it in our, in that email that I sent out, but we're expanding that general programming, which was really exciting. So how do we support other arts organizations downtown? We're continuing the sport of community led arts to the Co-Create program. So we increased that number to 95K this year.

So we had 90K last year, it'll be 95K this upcoming year. Steppin' on Main, we're super excited. We have a more robust lineup with more cultural organizations this year. I think I mentioned it a few times, but we are really excited for working with Cultural Fire Events, Samba Foga, Flamingo Jazz, all of them. They do have larger contracts that we're working with. So we're excited to pay them again, exactly what they're worth and exactly what they're asking. And then just so you know, kind of going back to the top. So 55 to 58% of our total budget that you see is going directly to programmatic things. That's kind of exciting for this year. I'm really excited to continue growing these initiatives, growing these programs, and then pushing that by expanding this person, expanding our team with that person who will be running marketing and social media. So So us tell those stories of all those programs. **Matt Castillo** And just quickly, what is Creative Mornings? **Brittney Helmers** Great question. So we will be one of the main sponsors of Creative Mornings. It is actually it was here during the pandemic and then it kind of left and fizzled out. It's just a creative meetup once a month on Fridays, have coffee, eat donuts, and you will hear a speaker from the creative community discuss and talk about their process on a certain topic on that day. So we alongside The Shop and Adobe are the major sponsors for Creative Mornings this year. The next one, unfortunately, is not happening within the Blocks. It is right in the Granary. So we're kind of working that out, but every other one will be featured at The Shop on Friday mornings. **Matt Castillo** Where's The Shop? **Brittney Helmers** Fourth South and Third East. So the first one in January was actually put on by Randall Smith. He is a typography and graphic design teacher at the U. There was about 70 people that showed up to kind of have coffee, talk about the creative process. There was one with Jordan Gleason who runs Design Mob, another fascinating graphic designer across the city. This Friday is Travis Wynn. He runs Calle. It is a street soccer, street football company in Salt Lake City. They're doing murals on all of their street soccer courts. So he's talking about his process and his opportunities that he has kind of worked on. We're helping them to figure out how we feature more legacy arts organizations as well. We have talked to them about the Symphony, Ballet West, trying to get Jerry with Plan-B in there. And then we're also working to figure out how we get Dallas Graham in there to talk about our project with him. Absolutely Amazing Animals. So again, you have a document in front of you just looking at internal objectives, goals. We went through a process at the Downtown Alliance to figure out all of our goals. So you'll see Downtown Alliance goals. You'll see the Blocks goals for this year. You'll see my goals and you'll see Merinda's goals. We really kind of are pushing this again to grow and expand. You'll see the detailed action plan, but really just looking at what the Blocks' future goals are this year is to diversify the audience for all programs. Every program that you see on our budget, we're consistently consistently ourselves, are we doing enough with performing arts? Are we doing enough with visual arts? Are we doing enough with musicians? It's not, are we doing enough, but it's also, hey, what opportunities are we creating with them? And how are we pushing this idea of an artist's district? Develop that comprehensive marketing strategy to broaden the reach of the Blocks' message and amplify the voices of all artists. So tell the story in the backgrounds more. And then one thing we've been noticing on our social media with a lot of our collaboration posts is reaching 50 to 75% non-followers with every social media post. It's kind of exciting to see that you can do that and you can push that. I'm not the data and or analytics person, but I get really excited when I get to view those insights and I see that happening because to me that is new audiences. That is really building something unique here. And then number three,

establish The Blocks as a recognized brand among artists, developers, residents, and city stakeholders. So we're continuously pushing that as well. And then speaking of data analytics, you guys are all familiar with this after last meeting, but how do we measure that criteria of impact from every program? I don't think I have done a good job of this in the past, so I'm excited to continuously do this and build that. Make sure we capture everything from every program. Make sure we're capturing and we're understanding the budget, the audience attendance, the barrier of entry for artists hired and that social media engagement. ***Felicia Baca***

Can I ask a question about, I mean, I can guess ways in which the budget is an impact, but if somebody were like, obviously fundraising which is lower on the list, that's clear. But how would you say the budget is a goal? ***Britney Helmers*** I look at the budget as a goal based on all of these. So for instance, our asset and loan program, right? It is zero dollar budget, but we are putting quite a bit of work into creating that for all arts organizations. We receive more back from it than we're putting into it. So we're not putting any money into the program. We're simply receiving recognition with all of our arts organizations. They understand who they understand how we're doing this and we're also amplifying their message at the same time. ***Matt Castillo***

Can you elaborate a little bit as well on barrier of entry for audience? ***Britney Helmers*** For artists? Good question. So this actually came after a conversation with Renato from the Arts Council, our Hidden Waters program that we just created on North Temple. It is a great way to get artists involved into the public art program. And sure enough, if we realize through Hidden Waters that it was a low barrier of entry for new artists to have their art showcased. We also look at this in the same way with our Exhibitions on Main. We are trying to get new artists out there, get their ideas showcased and then create these programs for them. So we have, this is a program where artists with zero experience are able to be showcased. Whereas we have other programs such as Mariachi Festival where we're looking for extremely skilled artists. So we're looking at that low barrier and then those skilled and beginner artists. ***Matt Castillo*** I wonder if it's helpful to maybe take this ones more level and actually create metrics around these, right? And maybe that's already in a future slide. But I think it's easy to talk about what success looks like here. But oftentimes we find ourselves at the end of the year and we say, well, how do we know if we really, you know, so if we actually put something that's a little bit more concretely measurable, which I think we can do all of these things really. It might be helpful in kind of telling that story or helping to do the kind of that self assessment. ***Felicia Baca*** The way that we do that in our metrics is we track two things. One is this your first time you've applied to our entity and second is this your first time being granted an opportunity. And that's literally just a tally mark for every application that's open to the public for us. ***Britney Helmers*** That's great. So we do have all of those blocks for every single program with each of these criteria is that we have been measuring from each of the last years and then our goals for this year based on all of that.

And then make sure that this is kind of that metric of success that we're aiming for. So for instance, this was what we showcased for the Mariachi festival, what we did last year, what our goals are for this year, right? Based on that criteria of impact and those specific numbers per program. And then again, now I feel like if we adopt this this year, we have this information that we presented last year, then we can push this for next year. Like, we need to figure out how we're a year ahead, right? Or how we think a year after and how we take that look back.

Spencer Lawson And I think this is nice because we can say, you know, if we have this data, historical data, that's really great. But if we saw one more person attend the event, is that

considered an impactful event? Even if we were supporting X number of artists, like, I think that's a good way for us to see, you know, the number of attendees didn't really rise that much. We weren't able to see any corporate sponsors. Our social media reach was about the same. And that can show us in the following years, maybe we should look at another project to fund or support. **Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling** How are we gathering the audience attendance information?

We have someone there, clicking? **Britney Helmers** Estimated. With every Eccles show that we're working for, Steppin' On Main, we do have someone clicking. For some of our bigger things, yes, we have someone clicking. For some of our smaller things, such as like our Visit Salt Lake partnership, it's really difficult for us to capture that data of who's walking by every single one of our buskers. So we do work with Visit Salt Lake and ask them how many people went to the convention and they have those numbers. So, and then since they are providing those funds for us, we utilize those numbers. That hey, 9,000 people or 20,000 people were at FanX. We paid five buskers to be on the street. So when they were all flooding out those doors, we know how many people were there. **Spencer Lawson** We're not utilizing Placer anymore?

Britney Helmers So Placer really works for the larger blocks and for really large programs. If they are in a small vicinity, it does not capture enough data for us. But yes, we still use it occasionally. **Matt Castillo** One thing, I think we, I might have mentioned this in the last meeting, but one thing we started doing in arts and culture and I'm sure we're planning to do it for Mariachi. Maybe for some of the Steppin' on Main events. But for those events that are free where it's really hard to track where folks are coming from. If it's their first time, we started doing like having a volunteer come and do on-site surveys. So it's like a three-question survey on an iPad. And it's been really successful actually. Usually we get about 10% of people responding, which I feel like is a pretty good gauge. And it's really interesting to see again, you know, what zip codes people are coming from. If they've attended this event or attended that venue in the past, things like that. And that's been a really great metric for us to determine like, are we actually reaching new audiences or, you know, some events we've found like, these are just the exact same audiences that are always coming. You know, maybe this isn't the right event. So that's one thing. I mean, we'll of course share the data for the Mariachi Festival. And I think, you know, again, we found that it's pretty successful. You just have to find someone to volunteer for it to help with it to do that survey. But that might be another really helpful metric in terms of expanding audiences. And I was supposed to talk about at the county level, you know, are we bringing people from across the county to benefit from the core? That's really helpful data for us to share that story. **Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling** And how are you defining uniqueness? **Britney Helmers**

Oh, good question. It's a loaded question. We kind of look at that with our Co-Create program. Has it been done before? Has it ever been seen before in Salt Lake City? Is it one of a kind? So for instance, this year with our Co-Create team and our Co-Create Arts Advisory Board, a Day of the Dead Festival has never been done in Salt Lake City. So we look at that as like our uniqueness. Like the most artistic Latinx, Mexican culture, artistic event has never been done here. That's uniqueness to us. **Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling** So measured against history.

Britney Helmers Absolutely. **Matt Castillo** Wasn't there one in Trolley Square that's been happening for so so years? I thought there was. **Britney Helmers** I would love to know more about it. I was actually looking for other opportunities and other things and I didn't find anything. So yeah, trying new things. We're not afraid to kind of take those risks to try those new things to make sure that we're building the right type of arts district. **Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling** And so if

there were a new program directed to youth, that would fall within, because there isn't anything on here about age, right? **Britney Helmers** Absolutely. Correct. And last year we did put on the first ever Youth Music Festival with SLAM. We're working with them to figure out how they can utilize some of the tiny stages that we're putting around town. We're working with them on busking opportunities. But yes, age is a really great thing to think about as well. **Matt Castillo** I think that uniqueness actually is really powerful to be able to say, you know, are we doing things that haven't been done before? Do they duplicate services? Yeah, I think that is actually really important. I'm glad glad doing that. So that kind of gives you a well-rounded idea of how we're thinking about the budget, how we're thinking about the goals, how we're thinking about the impact. Again, thinking forward to look back. Any other questions on the budget or shall we...?

Seth Brown I just have one quick one about the broadcast media portion. How have we quantified the success of that and who are we reaching? Because I was a little surprised to see it as the largest line item under marketing. **Britney Helmers** Great question. Josh, who have we worked with on broadcast media in the past? **Josh Jones** Broadway Media. And before that, we've actually purchased through Love Communications to do broader radio buys. But we've found that the buys through Broadway Media, for one thing they can track that and measure the audience that they're getting, we've also done a lot of buys with Spanish radio, Spanish language radio. is...the cost is really great and it feels like that audience will come to our programming. It's the most expensive thing in the marketing just because, you know, social media is so cheap in comparison. **Britney Helmers** Good question. So when I came on, I challenged that number tremendously with the board because we were working with Love Communications and we were doing \$80,000 a year on broadcast media and a buy with Love Communications and we weren't necessarily seeing that return. So yes, we've kind of diminished that and you'll see that line item across for each of those. But some of these programs, I think it is ideal to get on the radio and kind of showcase that message. **Josh Jones** I think at the beginning it was institutional marketing for the Blocks and the necessary to get everything out there and now the strategy with Britney and I think wisely is more programmatic marketing to get people downtown first, the reason they want to come here. **Isaac Gonzalez** Do you guys do email campaigns as well? **Britney Helmers** not necessarily campaigns I'd say but we do try to send out large emails to all of the arts organizations that we have. Anytime we're doing certain types of programming, so last year with the brand relaunch, we did send out large emails, we did send out one for all of our Co-Create. **Josh Jones** We do This Week Downtown which has an audience of 7,000 people, comes out every week. **Isaac Gonzalez** It'd be cool because like for festivals, conferences, email is huge. It's just like a reminder of things that are coming up and I feel like with the Blocks sometimes, obviously you guys are fixing that but just an email, this is what's going on this week. I don't know if you guys are already doing that or not but obviously you need people to opt in. **Dee Brewer** This Week Downtown, Josh, what's the open rate? **Josh Jones** It's like 40%. It's really good. If you're not subscribing, I'd suggest that you do because it's both legacy arts organizations and it's all the great programming that the Blocks is going to do. **Spencer Lawson** So is this social media line item, this is for paid? Paid ads are boosting? **Britney Helmers** Correct. **Spencer Lawson** Josh, do you know if we're getting any added value in the broadcast media? Are they providing anything additional to that or is it just? **Josh Jones** Oh yeah. I'd have to look but it's almost two to one usually. **Britney Helmers** On that same note, I looked back at quite a bit of traditional marketing. We're working

currently on a marketing mailer to send out to 90,000 people across the Salt Lake Valley for free things that are happening in the blocks this summer. So we're excited to send that out probably by June. We have a really amazing graphic designer that's working on that, i.e. Seth Brown. So we're pumped to do things like that as well. **Spencer Lawson** Okay, I'm sorry I have one more question. So I see that the PR line item is crossed out. So are we doing PR through the DTA instead or is there no... I assume it's Josh doing it. **Britney Helmers** Correct. **Spencer Lawson** Any final things we need to say? Okay. Well, wonderful budget. I think we should put it up for vote. All those in favor of approving the budget? Raise your hand. Any opposed? Approved, congratulations.

Moving Forward and Ideas on how to grow The Blocks

Britney Helmers Awesome. That's exciting. Super fun. Really, the next couple of things that we have on this agenda, which I think we're moving right along, is I've had conversations with each of you, but a discussion moving forward and ideas on how to grow the Blocks. Ideas from you, the board on how we continuously grow funding and how we do grow this program more than we already are. Mohan I know you're a master funder. Just kind of want to open it up as a full discussion between you, the board, and see what you guys think and or ideas that you may have. **Mohan Sudabattula** Yeah, I think the Blocks has a really big opportunity to establish a brand for Salt Lake City. In order to help meet some of these KPIs, like lower barrier of entry to artists and see more diversity coming in, I think the current perspective from a bunch of artists I know when they think of the Blocks is it's just another grant opportunity. It doesn't really have much of a brand behind it. It's just like another funding source for a project. And that's not what the Blocks is trying to accomplish in my opinion. that's not why I wanted to join this committee. If we are really trying to elevate the general culture and sentiment of the arts downtown, I think there's a bigger obligation to try and elevate the Blocks as more of an institution where people should feel excited to be a part of the Blocks. You aren't just funded, you are funded by the Blocks. A very supportive and inclusive but otherwise elite organization that helps support artists. And that kind of exposure I think comes down to supporting some of the programs that we have but at the same time really needing to broadcast a little bit more of what the Blocks is already doing and really shift away from the perspective of this is just again, another funding source for artists. How we get to that, I'm super curious. That's just kind of my opinion and word on the street of how people think about the Blocks. But yeah, I don't know, what do you all think? **Spencer Lawson** I feel like one thing for me is like making sure that people understand that the entertainment being provided is supported by the Blocks. To me that means your average person who's your average drunk person downtown who is not an arts attendee in general, they should be seeing the logo. They are, but especially for me, buskers. If we're paying or supporting a busker, there should be a little sign up front saying in partnership with the Blocks. I don't know if that's a weird thing in terms of if that's okay with the artist. We need to make sure that we're doing that in the proper way. But I want people to walk by and say, oh my gosh, the Blocks is supporting this busker right now. Or just to make it feel like it's an intentional thing that we're doing to program downtown. Especially for people who live outside of the core, who are coming here for a conference, but also people who are even unfamiliar with the Blocks, maybe that could start a conversation. **Britney Helmers** Love that idea. I think we could definitely do busker mats and or things. There's signage for every busker. **Isaac Gonzalez**

Yeah, I think like to that, I feel like the Blocks, the brand still feels like a bit like underground. It hasn't hit the mainstream, I guess, if we say it like that. Finding ways with marketing and storytelling, that'll help a lot. But yeah, bringing it, just telling that story in a better way and being able to bring that brand to what's more visible. Not necessarily with signage, but overall. **Seth Brown** Something I've been thinking about based on our last meeting was the equipment rental program. And I'm thinking about how we can rethink that or maybe expand the offerings that we have. That seems sort of like a lower barrier to entry type of thing. Because you've got signage on most of the equipment, right? And I think that there's not a lot of organizations that are maybe aware of that program. So maybe just expanding the reach of that. And also maybe rethinking the costs of the equipment. I don't think everything needs to be totally free. But that seems like we have the equipment. If we rethink that program, that's sort of an immediate funding source that I think also gets our name out there. **Spencer Lawson** Have we thought about hosting some kind of fundraising event? **Britney Helmers** We have not. **Spencer Lawson** Because I feel like there's a big conversation right now about downtown. It's changing. We're talking about ways to support residents downtown, the unsheltered downtown. Like to really make the downtown core feel like more of a welcoming space for everyone. And so if we could do that, but then also invite some people who are big in that conversation, you know, thinking of the Smith Entertainment Group. Like these large organizations to say we are a part of that solution to program downtown in a very intentional way. But if we had a gala evening on the top of the parking garage and invited some co-create people. Do you know what I mean? Stuff like that. That could be, we could find a way to not spend a million dollars obviously to host this fancy event. But we did a happy hour six to eight and say, hey, we're going to have some people there. But it's an intentional, we're inviting movers and shakers to be a part of that. I think that could be interesting. **Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling** Plus I think there's an expectation, right, that we're moving very much, that we're all moving into with our nonprofit organizations being able to see volunteerism. And increasing fundraising. So I think if we were not to do that, right, it would be, yeah. **Mohan Sudabattula** I think like another way to think about growing and potential activation of revenue is, so the Co-Create program is fascinating. And I think trying to, what I've noticed, right, is with artist pasts, they'll show up, they'll do something really cool. And then they're just kind of gone afterwards. There's not much of a capture on the ripple of what happens to the artist and where their career goes, or any like real tracking or amplification after the fact. And so, to help elevate The Blocks as an organization, like going through the Co-Create application process is fairly competitive, and really taking the folks that get awarded the funds and making them like these cohorted champions of the year, and really capturing their story throughout and afterwards, I think not only elevates the artists in a way that perhaps other funding opportunities don't, but at the same time creates a certain fidelity to the program. And then we can keep track of these cohorts of, not only were you an artist, but you were a Blocks artist, right, you did this for the city. And starting to build out what could be a pretty promising alumni network, that's how you can tap into gifts down the road, whether it's from the artist or like other supporters of that artist, right, like being able to tap onto that in future contexts is going to be huge, but something needs to be kind of activated now. **Britney Helmers** Love that. That's exciting. **Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling** So I have three things. One thing is, so in all the organizations I'm involved with, and my company, right, our law firm, I think everybody has to be looking at, and people may not like this, but what AI tools can we utilize to do all sorts of things,

right? So I just did a really quick, Juvo chat analysis, "how AI can help arts organizations", and I mean it gives us all these things to think about. I think we should be utilizing, you know, deep AI. I love to see what that would generate. And just, again, some part of our discussion should be about tools to help us impact analytics, foster growth, cut costs, market, right? And then I think the other discussion that's really important is what is the discussion around our artists and our participants utilizing AI in their art form? of course, there's a discussion that has to take place around that, and one of the reasons why I'm saying that is I think we've all seen a lot of artists and writers, people in the arts, saying in their piece, AI was not used to generate this piece. And so is that something that's valid, that's important? I just think we have to be talking about that, as much as we maybe don't like it, and we don't like what it's doing to the arts, it's here. And, you know, there's all sorts of tools. I can, again, just see from five minutes of research the tools that arts organizations are using to leverage AI. And that's just from a practical side, right? If anybody's used deep AI programs, I mean, it's just unbelievable. I mean, in 15 minutes, it will generate 50 pages of analysis after looking at the world's data. **Isaac Gonzalez** That's like cheating. **Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling** Well it is, but it's a discussion I think we have to be having. Every organization should be having it or you're missing something. **Britney Helmers** We have been using AI quite a bit. And honestly, we have been uploading all of our cultural core board presentations. We've been uploading all of our budgets. We've been uploading all of our things. So it learns exactly what it is that we do. Our website, all of our information. Every scope of work from every program. So then we can figure out that impact a little bit quicker. So we can start to talk about the numbers easier and simpler. Also on all of our calls for artists, we do ensure that we have a note on there that no AI generated art is accepted, because we are still here to support the creatives. From an organizational perspective, yes, as a time saver, we are working with it. It helps. I mean, I hate to be that person to say that it helps on the back end organizationally, but unfortunately, from a creative perspective, we do need to make sure that, hey, the work is either graphically represented or it is true visual arts. We had a project on Hidden Waters that we were unsure if the artwork was AI generated or was not, and we kind of went back and forth and it was not. So we, but we have had to think about that quite a bit. So, but I appreciate you bringing that up. Do you feel like something like that a conversation should be had with all arts organizations that we could host a, I don't know, a talk or a conversation with around downtown? **Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling** I think that would be helpful. I mean, I know a lot of our builders, right? Our developers. They're all very interested in what AI tools are available for them, right? And again, funders, banks, anybody who's involved in giving capital to a company is going to be asking, well, what tools are you using? Are you rejecting it? Are you utilizing it? That's the very first question. So I do think that we could give value to the arts community by just talking about it. What is everybody's opinion? And then you're going to think about it. And then like, here are some tools. I don't know that we want to go that far. **Felicia Baca** It could be cool to, I don't know, we've been kind of keeping an eye out for, we've been to a variety of workshops in different contexts all over the place in terms of quality, but it could be cool to just partner on a workshop. **Britney Helmers** I'd be open to that. How it's being used and maybe bring somebody in that you think is really fantastic to kind of lead a conversation in the arts about that. **Spencer Lawson** And provide actionable ways to actually use it instead of just like a general discussion. It's like, these are some ways that our organization has used it that could help you. At my office, I mean, the advertising world is like, what is AI doing to our,

you know, and so we have a committee that we meet once a month in my office. Like, how are we using it to help us versus letting other companies use it and surpass us? You know, we're not producing AI generated artwork for our clients, but we are using it to make our processes more efficient and that's how it should be used. **Britney Helmers** Love that. Any other conversations that you guys want to have around moving forward and ideas on how to grow The Blocks? Definitely, again, just an open discussion here. I want to invite you guys more into all of these conversations that we consistently have, but also, we'll have coffee and chat more about it.

Josh Jones I just wanted to add a few things marketing related. The conversation of institutional marketing I just think that, you know, one of the things that The Blocks have been lacking is a full time marketing person. That's really the role of this organization and staff time, maybe it's 40%, you know, it is hard. So, I think that the best use of your funds is to find some people who really dig down on these strategies that you guys talked about. I think it's really great. And to that point, you've got a lot of options. So, I'm really excited for this person to come onboard. **Britney Helmers** In four days with the application open for the marketing and social media manager, we have 76 applicants. **Spencer Lawson** Use AI to look at all of them. **Britney Helmers** Wow, yeah that's a great point. **Spencer Lawson** Upload them all and say find me the 10 or 15 best. **Britney Helmers** I love that. **Spencer Lawson** I'm the most efficient person you've ever met. **Britney Helmers** Not only that, obviously we've had conversations with each of you about like that content on who we're working with. Like for instance, Mohan and Li are meeting with Kuya Allen, with Downhaus. Isaac, you and I have tried it about that content. Seth, you and I have kind of talked about that, but like who that person wants to work with to create that content that will also be a really big thing and a really exciting thing to see how we move that forward. **Felicia Baca** I appreciate that reminder, Josh, because you know, our contract does kind of outline the buckets of where we dedicate funds and I'll talk more about this later, but that kind of responsibility that we have to promote the existing entities in the core is going to become really important with what's happening federally. Just funding and locally to funding because it's all going to kind of trickle down and I think it's important outside of the programming the blocks is doing or that's partnered with Co-Create that part, a huge part of our mission is supporting the existing entities that are already doing the kind of work in the core. **Britney Helmers**

Can I build on that? So exciting because we have been meeting with a lot of our legacy arts organizations to chat with them about things like that. We just had a really amazing conversation with Gina Bachauer Foundation the other day. It is their 50th year next year. We're looking at some of our current programs on how we actually support our legacy arts organizations through those current programs. And so with it being year 50, maybe our Visit Salt Lake partnership is not just buskers next year, but how we're partnering with Gina Bachauer and putting pianos on the streets and pianists are playing as buskers to kind of think about it very differently and how we're supporting Gina Bachauer through those programs. So trying to get creative with it, trying to think about it a little bit differently, instead of just saying, hey, we're here to support you, we want to make sure that they have that visibility front and forward. Things such as Locally Made, Locally Played and or presenting at the Downtown Farmers Market, working with our legacy arts organizations for them to have that, for them to be able to program for a month at the farmers market rather than us working with artists. It is kind of saying, hey, you know what, we want you to promote this, we want your brand to be front and center, but hey, we're working together to make sure you have that visibility. So for instance, at the farmers

market this summer, Utah Blues Society will be front and center at the farmers market. We are working with UBLAC, Utah Black Artists Collective. We are working with Women in Music. Utilizing our arts organizations to get them in front in some of our current programs. Okay, thank you guys. Just kind of moving right along on that. This is a great discussion. I appreciate you. I appreciate these conversations.

Cadence of Meetings

Britney Helmers We're meeting once a quarter, right? Should we meet more than once a quarter? How about our busy schedules? Or suggestion to meet once a month, but every other month be like a mixer type event. Or should we meet every other month so that equates to about six per year. Maybe not every meeting is simply about the budget, but we're kind of coming together to have more conversations like this. What are your guys thoughts here? I want to open it up because we don't have a meeting set for June. August, we would not necessarily be reporting on this past year just yet. We wouldn't do that until September, but I would hate to not meet with you guys until September. So what are you guys thinking about there? **Mohan Sudabattula**

Britney Helmers Yeah, Brittany and I had a long conversation about this one. So to preface, I hate meetings. But I think we honestly should be needing more. Mainly because right now, especially given the tapestry of Salt Lake City, there's a lot of very important conversations that are happening just in the conclaves of all of the streets around the art. And keeping a better pulse on what's going on and being able to understand more what that means for our positioning and our decisions. I think we need to just have more touch points from just honestly a commitment to what we're trying to do. But also on top of that, I mean, I love you guys. I don't really know any of you. So as we're talking about these bigger things and helping create something so important within our city, I think it's important for us to at least have some level beyond just conversations at the table and start building those relationships with one another. That's just, you know, it's going to make everything that much more effective and efficient. And I mean, give people more confidence to even speak up in meetings like this. So yeah, I personally think we should meet. I like the idea of once a month, but every other month doing some kind of mixer or almost like not a writer's room per se, but just kind of like, hey, what's going on? What are we excited about in the city? How can we show up? And then like every other month, having it shift more into something like this, a bit more strategic. But yeah, that's my take. **Issac Gonzalez** Yeah, I think, I mean, our role here is to approve budget and look at budgets. But I think opening up that conversations to talk more about these things, right? Like how can we improve things? How can we help? What ideas do we have? I think that'd be awesome. **Britney Helmers** Do you think every month or what are you thinking? **Issac Gonzalez** I think, I like that idea. Alright. It's a commitment, right? Yeah. It's not easy, but if we can, that would be cool. **Spencer Lawson** And I feel like if we're doing every other month like a regular board meeting like this, those are the priority. And every other month, if you're able to make it, you know, sometimes schedules are hard. **Felicia Baca** Because think you have interest in all of us attending more events. And if we're meeting every month plus events, I think that could be a challenge. **Spencer Lawson**

Well, maybe even if our every other month when we're having a mixer type thing, is at an event. It's not in the morning. It's in the evening. At an event, say we are all meeting at this event. We're all going to talk to each other and say hello. I think that would be kind of killing two birds with one stone. Maybe we go get a drink before going to the thing or whatever. **Issac Gonzalez**

It's forcing us to go to the thing. **Seth Brown** I like the idea of engaging with organizations or businesses that are not a part of what we're immediately doing. And just learning from their experience as well. **Kathryn Carlisle-Kesling** I also think too, heading into the contract for normal time, right? That this is really important. That everybody know that the board, that we're engaging more, that we care about engaging more, that we care about forming a greater connection. That's really important. And we should be talking about that. **Britney Helmers** Love that. I think that's great. Claudia, I'm so sorry. We have not had you on the whole time. What do you, what's your schedule look like to have kind of meetings every other month, but a mixer sort of type thing every other month? **Claudia Lyoaza** No I agree. And I think that's a very smart way of being efficient with time and capacity, but also kind of forcing us to get out into the community with, I think, intention and a purpose. So I love that. And I think even, I don't know if next meeting or at some point, just going to the calendar and putting all these events that are up and coming kind of in motion. I'm sure that there's probably plenty of events that we'll overlap with anyways, but I am in full agreement and excited to get to know you all while out there.

Britney Helmers Love that. Okay. Thank you guys. This is awesome. With that, we could select the next board meeting for Tuesday, June 3rd or Tuesday, July 15th. We could give ourselves a month off in June. And then maybe we do a mixer type thing on July 15th. How would you guys feel about that? Or a selected date? How about I look at the next events happening. I'll send out a poll. Okay, great. I love that. Thank you guys. Appreciate it. So I will send out the, so we have next meeting on here at TBD, but we will send out those ideas and those times with everybody to get together in a less formal sort of thing. Appreciate you. Thank you. Thank you.

Art & Culture Updates

Britney Helmers So really last thing we have on here is the other arts and culture events. So I will let you, Felicia, kind of take that over, but while you're at it, we have a couple future events to showcase on the board. **Felicia Baca** So so we have this Friday. If you, one of our projects we have going on right now is Wake the Great Salt Lake, which is the Bloomberg Philanthropies initiative of raising awareness about the lake. So this Friday, our Instagram handle for Wake is WakeGSL, and we have something called the Billboard Bash, which is an unveiling of sort of billboard murals on the west side of the community. It's going to be kind of like a small, it's not really a parking lot. It's a lot though with billboards. It's a week popping up. And that's Friday 6 to 8. So come out to that, y'all, if you're interested. Of course, Living Traditions is happening the third weekend in May. The banners look awesome. Thanks for the support. We are happening at the same time as Kilby Block Party this year. So we would love just the support of people coming out. And also, if you have bandwidth on our social media to share calls for volunteers, we're still doing kind of a last push. We're actually in a pretty good place. But that's a great way to kind of support our cultural communities that are feeling lots of no fun stuff from the federal level. And then we're, of course, Busker Fest is the last weekend in May this year. So we're excited about that. So that's kind of the big stuff coming up. We have the usual kind of gallery strolls and things of that nature. I thought, we talked a little bit before in the group, I thought I'd talk a little bit about what's happening at the federal level with funding. We heard last Friday that the president's administration had proposed the elimination of the national endowment for the arts. This has happened in most Republican administrations, but there's always been very strong bipartisan support for that as well as the national endowment for the humanities, public

broadcasting, museum and library services, all the things that are really small line items in the federal budget. But of course, we are seeing that things are important. And so that elimination was proposed. How this affects Utah mostly is our Utah Division of Arts and Museums has over a million dollars in granting that trickles down to many of the arts organizations that we work with. For project grants, for general operating support, for our organization, general operating. And then as you know, the Division of Arts and Museums, our state arts council, did also not fare well. In the legislative session. So we will be seeing state level cuts. And then whatever happens at the federal level is bound to impact them. There's a Trib article today. Many of our organizations on Friday saw that their either grants already in progress were rescinded. That they have maybe already paid funds for because it's a reimbursement basis. And where many of us are waiting to hear about the 2025 grants from the NEA. We received a number of emails that staff are taking the deferred retirement. We've never seen that from the NEA before. We got two emails from two different teams and other artistic disciplines. Also got many of those emails yesterday. So this is the time to contact your federal representatives. There's lots of scripts online. Congress.gov will help you find who your representative is. It's time to be noisy and talk about not eliminating the national endowment for the arts. There's many other things that impact our sector. Of course, public broadcasting is impacting our arts orgs like KRCL, things of that nature. Museums and libraries. Humanities. We saw a couple weeks ago to really decimating our Utah Humanities Council. And so it's time to make your voices heard. We're going to see this affecting all of our artists and organizations for years to come. So not positive news. So we're going to just kind of be monitoring and activating our boards. But any opportunities you have to kind of advocate with your city councils, your state representatives, federal representatives, it's going to be really important. **Britney Helmers** Thank you for that. With that, I think we can adjourn our meeting unless there's any more. **Spencer Lawson** Okay, anything else anybody? **Dee Brewer** Can I volunteer one thing. You know, last week I was cleaning, doing a little spring cleaning. I found files from the origination of the Cultural Core initiative. It was interesting to go back that far and just see the things we were talking about. Not blowing smoke. This group here is really most engaged, I've seen this board, across ten years of discussions. Love the energy. Love the intellect that you're bringing to this. And I'm really looking forward to the next chapters. **Felicia Baca** Can I say that's true of the staff, too? Right back at you. **Britney Helmers** Thank you. Appreciate you. **Spencer Lawson** Okay, meeting adjourned.

With no other business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at **10:20am**.

The next meeting will be July 15th, 2025 at 9:00am