

## Proposals for CreateNYC

### 1) Create a new Usage Group under Mixed use zoned spaces specifically for community serving live/work/exhibit organizations.

**It's been going on for decades:** artists have been well known to live, work and present to the public in mixed-use spaces, "artist lofts" and DIY warehouses, frequently in underutilized or less expensive neighborhoods (eg, the development of Tribeca and SoHo is closely linked to artists' use of abandoned warehouses in the '60s). That artists perennially return to this occupancy strategy demonstrates a clear need and a large constituency. While you can find the artistic fruits of these fertile creative grounds in many museums, these spaces are stigmatized and endangered in today's NYC because of a competitive real estate market saturating the outer boroughs as well as greater regulatory scrutiny.

**It's more Affordable:** If I use the same square foot to cook my eggs, paint on a canvas, and host my exhibition, I save money. Emerging artists are more able to experiment with new ideas with a low barrier to entry -- working without needing financial success is so important to the creative process, so artists can be more self-reliant.

**It's Safe:** Currently, for a mixed use space to permit live/work/exhibit, different usages must be separated by walls or floors that would take a certain amount of time to burn. This regulation is unnecessary: if a space is safe enough for a public unfamiliar with the building conditions to enter and exit, then it is also safe enough for a person familiar with building conditions to sleep in a residential space directly adjoining the public gathering space. Moreover, if tenants are able to reach out to government agencies because of occupancy regulations, they are unable to reach out to the FDNY to prevent fires or the NYPD for safety, and exist completely outside of the public safety net.

**It's more Accessible:** If mixed-use spaces are confident in their compliance, they can openly reach out to their neighbors and integrate more fully with the entire community without fear of being shut down, to ameliorate gentrification, noise complaints and other negative effects associated with these spaces.

**It's more Sustainable:** As a more genuine community asset, these spaces can be more empowered to openly seek advisory and financial support from the public. Because they do not violate leases (which typically are void in the case of illegal occupancies), tenants can make greater use of their rights as renters and have more leverage against displacement.

**It's measurable:** If a space is unable to bring itself "above the table", the DOB, city planners, tax agencies, and others are left in the dark about vital activities in the city and are less able to understand what is happening.

**It's profound:** Mixed-use spaces are the only place where an architecture of togetherness is possible. The walls that divide apartment units are gone and people share resources. The distinction collapses between the work-in-progress and exhibited work through exhibiting in workspaces. Living in exhibition spaces shows that the individual and public are connected, and that daily life can be completely artistic. I'm not waxing poetic: when walls come down between residential, workspace and public space, everybody can benefit from the connectedness of the different parts of our life and a community can become much more vital.

## 2) Create a public-private nonprofit sending handypeople to cultural spaces

While the suggestion by many in our sessions of a consultant to DIY organizations is great, many problems with compliance or business model are long-term goals or unattainable. Professional support should also be given to lower hanging fruit of helping to ensure safe buildout of public gathering spaces.

Either through directly administering public funds and employees, or through a public-private partnership (analogous to Spaceworks), the DCA can make it easier for arts spaces to stay fire safe. Currently, low-budget spaces avoid necessary repairs (especially repairs that pre-emptively avoid danger) because it costs a lot of money to get a contractor through the front door, and they frequently charge usurious prices.

My proposal is that arts spaces pay minimum wage to contractors from a pool of contractors made available by the Cultural Handypeople Organization - organizations become eligible by demonstrating genuine cultural activities. The DCA's role is to subsidize the remainder of the wage, as well as to recruit a pool of qualified handypeople who will do a fair service to the arts organization, and have a deeper understanding of art spaces' unique needs of arts production.

## 3) Create an automatic text/email notification system for 311 complaints

Concerts are loud and it can be hard to manage volume on a day-to-day basis if spaces cannot afford staff or soundproofing. The 311 map is very useful, but a space can only learn about a 311 complaint several days after the incident. After repeated 311 complaints, the city often comes down with a forceful hand on the arts space through programs such as MARCH. If spaces immediately receive 311 complaints, they can immediately remedy the complaint and understand better how to avoid them in the future.

## 4) Make information about MARCH more publicly accessible, and create alterternative piecemeal methods to remedy noncompliant spaces

MARCH, an interagency task force designed to crack down on nightlife, is the ultimate fear of DIY spaces, and there is almost no information about the program other than horror stories. How do spaces avoid a MARCH? What are the contributing factors to a MARCH, and how can

they be avoided? MARCH often means instant death for a small arts organization, but if there were more accessible rules of conduct and means to correct bad behavior, unsafe or noncompliant spaces could proactively improve or be served with summons which do not utterly destroy the organization.

## 5) Eliminate the Cabaret Law

These laws were designed in the prohibition era, but are today used only to harass and intimidate music spaces when the police cannot issue a legitimate ticket. It is not a crime to dance, and this law leads to unfair police targeting of low-budget spaces.

## 6) Open up capacity building workshops to non-incorporated cultural organizations.

501c3s which receive over \$10k in discretionary funding are required to attend an all-day capacity building workshop (DCA-only funded orgs are exempt from the requirement). I attended a workshop and learned quite a bit about cash controls, conflicts of interest, donor cultivation, how various city agencies work, and much more. The workshop seemed to be targeted at very small nonprofits (most attending were funded for afterschool education) with inexperienced leadership.

But only perhaps 50 people attended in an auditorium with perhaps 200 seats. Without spending any additional money or changing the program, the DCA could market these workshops to non-incorporated cultural institutions to help them think differently about managing their businesses.