



Helping artists and their communities build assets and equity through financial literacy and home-ownership.

Dear Councilmember Van Bramer,

ArtHome was founded in 2006 to improve conditions for artists by helping them create stability in their own financial lives, through education, training and asset building. ArtHome assist artists and their communities in building financial literacy through responsible use of credit, equity building and through home-ownership.

ArtHome has also partnered with the New York Mortgage Coalition in bringing a series of three Homeownership Handbooks: *The Homebuyer Handbook*, *Mortgage Qualification Strategies* and *Foreclosure Prevention Handbook* directly to artists both locally and nationally. As an organization we work within the housing crisis issue and assist prospective homeowners in attaining the counseling they desire while also offering a balanced understanding of ones own finances.

ArtHome was created to allow artists to prosper in their environments and to help communities organically and economically take shape. We strongly believe the work that Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts (NOCD-NY) is undertaking runs parallel to our own work, with much room for singular or collaborative cross-pollination and cultural transformation.

Sincerely,

Michelle Proffit
Program Associate, ArtHome

ARTISTS IN THE ECONOMY: NEW YORK CITY

Artists play an integral role in the economy of New York City. They do this in a variety of ways, including:

- 1) They are entrepreneurs and generate economic activity
- 2) They influence the cultural milieu that is crucial to innovation
- 3) They contribute to the overall vibrancy of a community.

Artists are entrepreneurs and generate economic activity. Artists represent a critical segment of independent workers and small business owners in New York City. A 2000 census analysis showed that:

- There are **63,000** self-defined artists in New York City. This number does not include independent workers and other laborers who may do artistic work but do not self-identify as artists.



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- Of the total number of artists in the greater New York City area, over **41% are self-employed.**

How do they do this? Artists operate many different types of businesses. These range from selling their artistic products/goods to selling services related to their artistic practice to using skills from their artistic practice to inform other work. For example:

- Harlem resident Alton Weekes designs and sells handmade stationary. His stationary is available in over 40 stores, including Barney's and Neiman-Marcus, and in four countries (US, UK, Switzerland, and Japan). His business has expanded so fast that he has had to hire other people to help him fulfill orders.
- Queens resident Akiko Kato produces hand-crafted jewelry. She has recently moved her business from her home to a studio, and is hiring workers to fulfill orders and employing others to help her with marketing and PR.
- Brooklyn resident Dana Tamanachi works full time as a custom chalk letterer after a career in graphic design and has been commissioned by clients such as West Elm, Rugby Ralph Lauren, Google, The Ace Hotel, Adidas, *EveryDay with Rachael Ray*, Lululemon Athletica, and *Garden & Gun* Magazine. She has been interviewed and featured by The Wall Street Journal, Design*Sponge, and The Great Discontent.

Artists influence the cultural milieu that is critical to innovation. For decades, researchers have noted the importance of interaction and creativity on innovation in the economy. Artists help to push boundaries and provide inspiration and insight to other economic endeavors.

- "Artists have consistently pushed the technical creative envelope, and were among the initial users and promoters of new technology in a variety of media. Increasingly, the development, production and marketing of commercial products involve people with creative skills: advertising, graphic design, creative writing, drafting, and new media. Recognition of the importance of innovation as a result of creative activity could help center a cultural economic cluster."

Ooms, Alexander. "The Case for Cultural Economic Clusters." *HALO Partners, LLC*. January 2003.

Artists contribute to overall vibrancy of a community. Artists contribute to vibrancy in a number of ways:

- Place and Space:
 - A large proportion of self-employed artists work at home in either official or unofficial live/work space. Other artists may take advantage of underutilized space, generating new activity and increasing the presence of feet on the street during the day. Furthermore, artists are often involved in local beautification creative placemaking initiatives as partners with community developers or contractors with arts organizations.



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IN SUPPORT OF ARTISTS IN CULTURAL CLUSTERS:

A large study of cultural producers in New York City found that:

- 1) Cultural producers relied heavily on their social lives to advance their careers, obtain jobs, and generate value for their goods. The **social milieu** appeared to be the most important mechanism by which the cultural economy operates.
- 2) The cultural economy engages collectively. Cultural producers tended to **cross-fertilize**, collaborating to create goods and services, review each other's products, and establish new careers.
- 3) Agglomeration was important not just for the traditional reason that it provides access to labor pools and suppliers, but perhaps more importantly because it **advances the New York brand** and social environment.

Currid, Elizabeth. "How Art and Culture Happen in New York: Implications for Urban Economic Development." *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 73, No. 4, Autumn 2007. DOI 10.1080/1944360701673.332