

# Building a Better Venue

Creating The Glass Onion for the Oakland Community

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## ***Executive Summary***

This proposal outlines the construction of an alternative music venue, The Glass Onion, in Oakland using Carnegie Mellon University investment to provide educational and professional opportunities for its students, and enhance the larger Pittsburgh arts community.

The Glass Onion will be staffed and operated by Carnegie Mellon University with input from community leaders. A faculty advisory board consisting of members from Dietrich College, The College of Fine Arts, Tepper Business School, and The Heinz College will help direct student workers and advise their work. One faculty advisor from this board will act as the primary faculty advisor, and serve a more present and permanent role working with student staff closely. The student staff will be composed of undergraduate and graduate students from a variety of disciplines. Those students in higher positions will be paid by federal workstudy and tuition stipend programs. Volunteer positions will also be available for students to engage with the venue on a smaller level that can lead to later full-time experience.

Creating the space will cost at least \$50,000 and as much as \$74,000, given estimates of equipment, supplies and potential rent prices. However, it is important to stress the biggest obstacle in its construction is the cost of rent. Yet, this cost gets immediately reduced if the Glass Onion could operate in a space that Carnegie Mellon University already owns and is vacant.

## ***Introduction***

The Glass Onion will be an alternative music venue in Oakland. This proposal seeks to persuade Carnegie Mellon's Division of Student Affairs, directors in the Heinz College, Dietrich College, Tepper School of Business, College of Fine Arts, interested faculty in other colleges, and the local arts community to invest in the creation of the space. The musical history of Oakland, current gaps in Pittsburgh's arts community, the logistics of The Glass Onion, and a plan for its development follow.

There are gaps in the Oakland music scene and larger Pittsburgh arts community. Despite the strong history of alternative music in the area during the late twentieth century, a combination of socioeconomic and cultural forces pushed these outlets out. Although the local arts community is growing exponentially, it still faces challenges in providing artist opportunities, building new organizations, and supporting educational and non-profit initiatives. This proposal aims to address these challenges by building a new organization that directly connects local artists with city residents, creates an educational space for students, and serves as a model for future investment.

Central to The Glass Onion's administration are developmental opportunities for students and the larger arts community. The venue will be managed by undergraduate and graduate students of Carnegie Mellon University, who will be aided by faculty advisors and leaders from the Pittsburgh arts community. Experiential learning and interdisciplinary collaborations with community impact will directly further Carnegie Mellon University's mission as an anchor institution.

Given limited resources, this proposal seeks to create an accessible initial model for investment, one that inspires confidence and leads to future growth and development. Included are a low-cost development plan, proposed budget, and potential funding sources within Carnegie Mellon and the larger Pittsburgh community.

This proposal is the result of my work as a Dietrich Honors Fellow and my personal experiences. It draws from a variety of sources including books, local articles, research articles, institutional reports, and interviews with stakeholders. My own work as President of Carnegie Mellon's Activities Board, as an active booking agent, and as a musician in the city also fuels my arguments for this project. I hope that by creating this proposal Carnegie Mellon University invests in a space that will help its students and the larger Pittsburgh community.

## ***Historical Background***

### **Examining Oakland Music History**

Until the early 2000s, the Oakland music scene was thriving and recognized nationally. Three popular music venues that featured local and national acts in Oakland were The Graffiti, The Decade, and The Electric Banana. Being in the vicinity of the city's largest universities was crucial to their success.<sup>1</sup> The Decade stood at the corner of Atwood and Sennott Street, The Electric Banana at 3887 Bigelow Avenue and The Graffiti at 4615 Baum Boulevard (see Appendix 1). These three venues were known as "The Triangle" and featured shows on a near daily basis that haven't been seen in the area since their closings (see Appendix 2).<sup>2</sup> Each venue appealed to their respective audiences and niches. Over 1500 acts performed at The Graffiti, which focused primarily on popular rock, punk, and New Wave acts.<sup>3</sup> The Decade focused on original rock and blues acts during its 22-year tenure.<sup>4</sup> The Electric Banana featured New Wave, Punk, and heavier hardcore and metal acts in its lineup (See Appendix 3).<sup>5</sup> Along with local bands, these venues featured legendary musicians. Nirvana, the defining group of the alternative music scene, played the Graffiti just six days after the release of *Nevermind*, the album that would catapult the band to global music fame (see Appendix 4). Other internationally renowned acts, such as U2, The Police, Aerosmith, Black Flag, The Red Hot Chili Peppers, and Bruce Springsteen played in Oakland at varying points in their careers (see Appendix 5).<sup>6</sup>

Other venues also showcased music around Oakland. Shadyside housed an active jazz and folk scene from the 1960s until the new millennium. Clubs like The Balcony, Razzberry Rhino, and The Gaslight Club showcased a variety of local and national acts.<sup>7</sup> The Hill District was known for its prominent jazz scene during the mid-twentieth century.<sup>8</sup> The existence of these scenes demonstrates diverse local music was a part of Pittsburgh's cultural identity.

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<sup>1</sup> Andy Mulkerin, *Building A Better Robot: 10 Years of the Mr. Roboto Project* (Pittsburgh: University of Roboto Press, 2011).

<sup>2</sup> Brian Dollard, "Historical Oakland: Local Musicians Once Ruled Venues," *Pitt News*, March 27, 2012, <http://pittnews.com/article/14680/archives/historical-oakland-local-musicians-once-ruled-venues/>.

<sup>3</sup> "Graffiti Showcase and Rock Challenge," Pittsburgh Music History, last modified January 20, 2014, [https://sites.google.com/site/pittsburghmusichistory/pittsburgh-music-story/venues](https://sites.google.com/site/pittsburghmusichistory/pittsburgh-music-story/venues/graffiti-showcase-and-rock-challenge) /graffiti-showcase-and-rock-challenge.

<sup>4</sup> "The Decade," Pittsburgh Music History, last modified March 13, 2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/pittsburghmusichistory/pittsburgh-music-story/venues/the-decade>.

<sup>5</sup> "Electric Banana," [Joe], last modified April 2016, <http://www.electricbananacub.net/>.

<sup>6</sup> Dollard, "Historical Oakland: Local Musicians Once Ruled Venues."

<sup>7</sup> "Shadyside," Pittsburgh Music History, last modified January 20, 2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/pittsburghmusichistory/pittsburgh-music-story/venues/shadyside>.

<sup>8</sup> "Savoy Ballroom-Elmore Theater," Pittsburgh Music History, last modified January 21, 2014, <https://sites.google.com/site/pittsburghmusichistory/pittsburgh-music-story/venues/savoy-ballroom---elmore-theater>.

However, socioeconomic and cultural forces led to venues shutting down by the early 2000s. One of the most obvious forces at work was the use of neighborhood revitalization programs. The process of neighborhood revitalization began with Mayor Richard Caliguiri as part of the “Renaissance II” and continued under Mayor Sophie Masloff and Mayor To Murphy. At the heart of neighborhood revitalization was the “public-private partnership” that soon became the “virtually uncontested norm of governance in Pittsburgh.”<sup>9</sup> This collaboration partnered neighborhoods with “development-oriented nonprofits” and “marked a widespread commitment on the part of a city’s public and private leaders to abandon its industrial past and create a new economic and cultural identity.”<sup>10</sup> Within Oakland, the use of private corporations created tension between residents and community development corporations (CDCs). These corporations spent “much of their time...consumed in the pursuit of operating and project funds and building funding coalitions to support specific housing, commercial or service projects,” and were ultimately “an all-purpose neighborhood advocate with development capacity.”<sup>11</sup> The Oakland Planning and Development Corporation (the OPDC) faced criticism from residents who believed it focused on business relationships rather than meaningful development.<sup>12</sup>

One major failure of the OPDC was the demolition of the Syria Mosque in 1991. The Syria Mosque hosted live music acts like The Beach Boys, REM, Frank Zappa, Bob Dylan, Benny Goodman, and countless more.<sup>13</sup> In 1991, the Mosque was sold to UPMC for \$10 million. UPMC initially stated that it would use the location to “develop two office buildings” and “famously outbid the University of Pittsburgh” for the property.<sup>14</sup> However, UPMC ended up using the plot to create a “temporary” parking lot that still stands today. The settlement was highly controversial, led to the arrest of protestors including state senator Jim Ferlo, and dozens of futile benefits to save the Mosque (see Appendix 6).

The reconstruction of Pittsburgh’s cultural identity by city officials depleted Oakland of its music. Central to the idea of Renaissance is the reconstructing force of gentrification and an influx of wealth: “...the notion that gentrification represents some sort of urban renaissance or revival is widespread... [and its popularity] lies in its inherent optimism and the belief that the squalor is being expunged and the city is being

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<sup>9</sup> Roy Lubove, *The Post-Steel Era*, vol. 2 of *Twentieth-Century Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1996), VII.

<sup>10</sup> *Ibid.*, IX.

<sup>11</sup> *Ibid.*, 117.

<sup>12</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>13</sup> “Syria Mosque,” Pittsburgh Music History, last modified January 20, 2014,

<https://sites.google.com/site/pittsburghmusichistory/pittsburgh-music-story/venues/syria-mosque>.

<sup>14</sup> Sean Hamill, “Two Decades Later, Razing of Syria Mosque Still A Sore Topic”, *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Sept. 23, 2012, <http://www.post-gazette.com/local/city/2012/09/23/Two-decades-later-razing-of-Syria-Mosque-still-a-sore-topic/stories/201209230185>.

reclaimed for the respectable classes.”<sup>15</sup> The gritty club and alternative music scene exemplifies the “squalor” needed to be expunged in order to reshape Oakland’s identity.

College areas like Oakland and Shadyside were being reimagined as areas of commercial business. Two examples are Walnut Street and Forbes Avenue. Walnut Street transformed from a “hippie hangout to the home of the chic boutique” into the region’s “most upscale shopping district” with extremely high rental rates by the end of the twentieth century.<sup>16</sup> Riccardo Schulz, a music faculty member at Carnegie Mellon University, Shadyside resident of over forty years, and active member of the Pittsburgh music scene, describes the changes that were happening. Schulz states there were many “live bands in many of the bars in Shadyside, as well as the ‘music venues’” but “there’s no doubt that gentrification took many of these venues away.”<sup>17</sup> Oakland showed similar signs of gentrification. Paula Martin, a former student at the University of Pittsburgh in the 1990s and active concertgoer, states that Oakland is now “all chains. No record or music stores, no Tela Ropa or Doc Martens stores. No Beehive...Oakland was gritty and dirty so it fit the music well.”<sup>18</sup> Ultimately, youth music venues in Oakland were not prioritized nor supported because they did not fit into the cultural identities created by city officials.

These challenges forced venue owners to close their doors. Oakland’s unique culture was lost. As Oakland became more commercialized, independent stores like Tela Ropa, Bovers, and others that supported Oakland’s alternative culture, shut down.<sup>19</sup> Financial pressures from the changing demographic and identity of the neighborhood put pressure on music venues in the area. Mike Elko, a concert promoter who worked with each venue in The Triangle describes these changes: “[When] Pitt started buying stuff, everybody tried to get extreme amounts for rent. Well, you could only pay so much for rent and be able to stay in business...”<sup>20</sup> Even seemingly trivial costs made concerts unfeasible for promoters. Parking permits cost up to \$15 per day, meaning artist parking cost up to \$200, leading to higher ticket prices, thus making concerts unaffordable to a younger crowd.<sup>21</sup> The music industry was also facing repercussions from the advent of online music platforms. Elko describes how younger fans were beginning to spend time discovering artists online, with more artists focusing on developing their web presence instead of performing live. These pressures forced venue

<sup>15</sup> Peter Williams and Neil Smith, “From ‘Renaissance’ To Restructuring: The Dynamics of Contemporary Urban Development” in *Gentrification of the City*, eds. Peter Williams and Neil Smith, 204-223 (London: Allen and Unwin, Inc., 1986), 204.

<sup>16</sup> Dan Fitzpatrick and Teresa F. Lindeman, “As Real Estate Prices Soar, Walnut Street Faces Another Life Change,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, Sept. 26, 1999, <http://old.post-gazette.com/businessnews/19990926shadyside1.asp>.

<sup>17</sup> Riccardo Schulz (Carnegie Mellon University Music Faculty), interview with author, May 5, 2016.

<sup>18</sup> Paula Martin (Pittsburgh show-goer), interview with author, May 2, 2016.

<sup>19</sup> Katie Mavrich, “Missing the places that used to call Oakland home,” *Pitt News*, November 11, 2003, <http://pittnews.com/article/36355/archives/missing-the-places-that-used-to-call-oakland-home/>

<sup>20</sup> Brian Dollard, “Historic Oakland: Live music scene fades with advent of the internet,” *Pitt News*, April 9 2012, <http://pittnews.com/article/14500/archives/historic-oakland-live-music-scene-fades-with-advent-of-internet/>

<sup>21</sup> Ibid.



owners to close shop. Johnny and Judy Zarra closed the Electric Banana in 2000 after seeing the “chance to take advantage of the opening of a Residence Inn across the street by converting their club into a fine Italian Restaurant ... [By opening the restaurant] it didn’t matter what night of the week it was and who was playing.”<sup>22</sup> The inability for new venue owners to maintain their businesses exemplifies the increased financial burdens. The Decade closed in 1995 but remained a venue with new management, yet changed hands three different times and had four different names over the course of two years.<sup>23</sup>

However, areas envisioned as entertainment hubs were given city support. One example is the establishment of the Cultural Trust Downtown. The Cultural Trust was created in 1984 and soon became the Downtown provider for arts and entertainment. The Trust was established to “nurture the growth of a cultural district” that “planned to provide a critical mass of arts and entertainment activities in order to draw commercial investment and thereby expand the tax base and employment base of the city and region.”<sup>24</sup> In short, the Trust served as the City’s way of combining entertainment and consumption for the new gentry. The Trust acquired theaters and venues to host events by the Pittsburgh Symphony, the Pittsburgh Opera, the Pittsburgh Dance Council, the Bach Choir, the Renaissance and Baroque Society- the antithesis of outsider, alternative youth music.<sup>25</sup> The Trust further strained the music scene on Oakland. Riccardo Schulz states that after classical groups moved downtown from Oakland, events became “more expensive,” students felt “removed” and “intimidated” by the new spaces, and Oakland was “more or less abandoned as the cultural center of Pittsburgh.”<sup>26</sup>

Despite its strong cultural precedent for local music, Oakland now holds no music venues. Joe Grushecky, the famed Pittsburgh rock musician, describes the area’s drastic cultural change: “[Oakland] was the place to be, what South Side is now, on a smaller scale...Everybody was really into the music, and it wasn’t a fringe thing like it is now.”<sup>27</sup>

### Current Status of the Pittsburgh Music Scene

The Pittsburgh music scene has been growing exponentially in recent years. New music, festivals, production companies, and talent have been coming to Pittsburgh. Despite this influx, the Oakland area is still left without music venues (see Appendix 2). Three alternative markets have risen, yet none are true substitutes for an accessible venue in Oakland.

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<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Ibid

<sup>24</sup> Lubove, 194

<sup>25</sup> Lubove, 199

<sup>26</sup> Schulz, May 5, 2016.

<sup>27</sup> Dollard, “Historic Oakland: Live Music...”

### *The Pittsburgh DIY Scene*

The Pittsburgh DIY scene dominates the Oakland market. “DIY” stands for Do-It-Yourself, which embodies the scene’s main ideology. The DIY scene relies heavily on an underground network of promoters, musicians, venues, and social media. These groups self-promote, self-book, and self-produce shows at a myriad of unconventional venues like storefronts, living rooms, and basements. Shows can be booked at more conventional venues such as clubs and bars.<sup>28</sup> The DIY scene uses social media for promoting its shows on media like Facebook, websites, blogs and email lists (see Appendix 7). Shows often range from a donation based “pay-as-you-want” system to \$10 for attendees.<sup>29</sup> Despite its underground status, the DIY scene produces shows on a daily basis, making it a valuable contender to replace the once-thriving Oakland music scene.

Yet, there are several reasons why the Pittsburgh DIY scene cannot be a viable replacement for an established venue in Oakland. The inherent alternative and underground nature of the scene makes it inaccessible to first-time concertgoers. Although not intentionally exclusive or inclusive, the DIY scene relies on underground networking and promotion. First time concertgoers need to be added to specific Facebook groups, web lists, etc. to gain knowledge of where shows are happening. Unlike more established production companies, many DIY shows require individuals to message promoters for addresses and details about the show given their private locations. Rather than being a negative, this underground nature is central to the appeal of the DIY scene, which strives to keep outside the conventional music market norms.<sup>30</sup> The DIY scene’s underground status makes it a non-viable replacement for an accessible music venue in Oakland.

Second, the DIY scene has come under scrutiny from city residents and officials. The DIY scene plays a cat-and-mouse game with city police and neighborhoods. Noise-complaints and a property’s reputation as an established house venue lead to spaces being shut down. More recently, Oakland residents have begun taking note of “disruptive” properties as part of their Oakwatch program. With Oakwatch, disruptive properties that hold concerts can be monitored and landowners fined. Fines can stand up to \$100 a day until the disruption is brought up to city code, either by repairing the

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<sup>28</sup> Dhruva Krishna, “Interview: Jackson Boytim,” *Pittsburgh FoundSound Music*, January 22, 2016, <http://foundsoundmusic.com/news/2016/1/22/interview-jackson-pollack-boytim>; Mulkerin, *Building a Better Robot*.

<sup>29</sup> Shawn Cooke and Lucy Clabby, “Oakland house shows offer cheaper, more intimate live music,” *Pitt News*, September 17, 2014, <http://pittnews.com/article/5014/arts-and-entertainment/oakland-house-shows-offer-cheaper-more-intimate-live-music/>

<sup>30</sup> Leslie Haynsworth “‘Alternative’ Music and the Oppositional Potential of Generation X Culture,” in *GenXegesis Essays on Alternative Youth (sub)culture*, eds. John McAllister Ulrich and Andrea L. Harris, 41-58 (Wisconsin: The University of Wisconsin, 2003).

property or notifying tenants of the violations. Justified or not, these consequences lead to DIY venues being shut down.<sup>31</sup> The shifting nature of available venues makes the DIY scene unstable to provide a consistent, accessible market for Oakland residents.

Finally, safety concerns have raised questions about the viability of DIY scenes nationwide. After 36 people lost their lives in The Ghost Ship warehouse fire in California, there have been systematic shutdowns of DIY spaces. Concerns over safety and buildings being up to code have led city officials to force evictions.<sup>32</sup> These concerns have also been politically exploited, as alt-right groups have used these concerns to shut down spaces they view as liberal hotbeds.<sup>33</sup> With these threats, DIY members have taken measures to engage in safer practices. Online documents, such as “Harm Reduction for DIY Venues,” have been spread among the underground community for DIY members to ensure their spaces safety (see Appendix 8). Yet, even these measures may not be enough to convince city officials that underground DIY spaces can be used to safely showcase music.

Although the DIY scene provides a valuable underground space within Pittsburgh, its inherent underground nature, shaky relationship with city officials, and safety concerns do not make it a viable replacement for an established music venue in Oakland.

### *College Programming Boards*

Another alternative to Oakland music venues are college programming boards. Carnegie Mellon University’s AB has a budget over \$300,000 to bring musicians, comedians, lecturers, and other events to our campus. These programming boards make events safe and accessible to students. Events are always held on-campus with the utmost professionalism and care. With the amount of colleges and respective programming boards in Oakland, college programming boards may fill the void left behind by Oakland music venues.

Campus programming boards cannot replace Oakland music venue because of their on-campus aesthetic. One of the CMU AB biggest challenges is events is drawing students to weekend shows. Students would rather spend their time off-campus than seeing a concert hosted in an on-campus space. The same security and accessibility

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<sup>31</sup> Dale Shoemaker, “Oakwatch pushes city to monitor ‘disruptive properties,’” *Pitt News*, March 17, 2016, <http://pittnews.com/article/69639/news/oakwatch-pushes-city-to-monitor-disruptive-properties/>.

<sup>32</sup> Paula Mejia, “DIY in Crisis: Has Oakland’s Ghost Ship Fire Jeopardized The Underground?” *Rolling Stone Magazine*, December 28, 2016, <http://www.rollingstone.com/music/features/has-oaklands-ghost-ship-fire-jeopardized-the-underground-w456665>.

<sup>33</sup> Aaron Davis, “Online spaces become battleground over DIY spaces around the country,” *San Francisco East Bay Times*, December 24, 2016, <http://www.eastbaytimes.com/2016/12/24/online-spaces-become-home-to-battle-over-diy-spaces-around-country/>.

programming boards benefit from having their events on-campus is also a turn-off for many students.

Financial pressures also lead programming boards to focus on national and regional acts. Music committees must ensure they spend their budget during the academic year. Most of these budgets are targeted specifically for bringing regional and national headliners to our campus. This is indicative given most booking occurs through national booking agencies, as opposed to contacting local musicians. Lack of a formal structure to engage with local music makes it even more difficult for board members to identify local acts to showcase. As a result, local musicians are the occasional openers for larger bands, but often miss the larger college crowds that come to see the headliner.

Although college programming boards may have the security and budgets needed to support local music, perceptions of events being on-campus and financial pressures to focus on larger acts do not make it them viable alternatives for an established Oakland music venue.

### *Today's Pittsburgh Music Scene*

The Pittsburgh music scene has grown in recent years. Newer production companies such as Grey Area Productions, Opus One Productions, and Drusky Entertainment are bringing national talent to the city and supporting local music. Areas like Lawrenceville and the South Side are local music hubs, as new venues like Spirit, Cattivo, Club Café, and The Rex Theater pack their calendars with a wide variety of music. Local bands play showcases, larger events, or plan their own events by booking out clubs and working with established promoters. Pierce Marrato, an active showgoer and member of Grey Area Productions, discussed this revival of the Pittsburgh music scene: “It’s incredible. It’s growing daily, it’s incredibly supportive, [and] chock- full of talent....”<sup>34</sup>

These venues still cannot replace local music in Oakland because of lack of accessibility. Many venues are inaccessible without public transport or car. The closest venue to Oakland is nearly 35 minutes away walking, with most venues in Lawrenceville and the South Side well beyond that distance. Students will have to rely on taking the bus, driving, or more realistically Ubering to these venues. Assuming there is no surge pricing, a minimum base fare Uber will be \$6 one way. If the attendee Ubers both ways, that will be \$12 transportation cost. With most local concerts at a ticket price of \$5-\$10, this means attendees must spend at least \$17-\$22 to view a local concert without factoring any additional costs for drinks, food, etc. For college students interested in attending a local show this price point can be a huge deterrent.

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<sup>34</sup> Pierce Marrato (Booking Agent and Head of Promotions, Grey Area Productions), interview with author, 3 May 2016.

A second issue of accessibility is age restriction. Many venues serve as bars, with a 21+ age restriction. This prevents a huge portion of college students from attending local shows. Even if transportation costs were subsidized, students still would be unable to enter most local shows. With most students turning 21 in their junior or senior year, students lack exposure to most local music until their later college years. By that time many students miss the opportunity to make local music a formative part of their college experience.

### Filling the Gap

As a city, Pittsburgh supports arts and culture. Allegheny County alone has 350 arts organizations, with at least 63 percent of these organizations having budgets of \$250,000 or less.<sup>35</sup> Allegheny County accounts for more than 70 percent of the total Southwestern PA arts organizations in an eight county region including Beaver, Armstrong, Butler, Fayette, Washington, Westmoreland, and Greene.<sup>36</sup> In total, nearly \$1.17 billion is spent annually on the arts and by organizations within Allegheny County.<sup>37</sup> Pittsburgh has a high cultural vitality, which is defined as “the inherent ability of the arts to sustain themselves and thrive in the future.”<sup>38</sup> In a recent study, Pittsburgh was stated to be in a class of larger peers with regard to the arts. As opposed to cities like Baltimore and Cleveland, Pittsburgh is now being compared to cities like Austin, San Francisco, Portland, and Denver.<sup>39</sup>

Artists in the city have recognized the area’s strengths for its artistic community. In a 2013 GPAC SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) analysis, artists described Pittsburgh’s strengths and weaknesses. 226 artists, 65 of which were GPAC members, answered questions to highlight these different areas.<sup>40</sup> Highlighted strengths include: Pittsburgh being ranked #6 nationally in growth in artist employment; 78 percent of all artists are optimistic about their futures in Pittsburgh; more than 80 percent of the area’s small/mid-size arts organizations rate Pittsburgh artistic talent as

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<sup>35</sup>Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, *2010 Southern Pennsylvania Culture Count* (Pittsburgh: Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, 2010),

[https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/Research/Culture\\_Count\\_Research\\_brief\\_-\\_Small\\_Funders.pdf](https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/Research/Culture_Count_Research_brief_-_Small_Funders.pdf)

<sup>36</sup> Ibid.

<sup>37</sup> Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, *Arts, Culture, and Economic Prosperity in Allegheny County, PA* (Pittsburgh: Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, 2010),

[https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/Research/AEP\\_IV/ACEPAAlleghenyCtyPA2013.pdf](https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/Research/AEP_IV/ACEPAAlleghenyCtyPA2013.pdf)

<sup>38</sup> Ibid.

<sup>39</sup> Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, *Connecting Pittsburgh Creatives I & II: Summary* (Pittsburgh: Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, June 19, 2010), presentation.,

[https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/Connecting\\_Pittsburgh\\_Creatives\\_I\\_and\\_II\\_SUMMARY.pdf](https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/Connecting_Pittsburgh_Creatives_I_and_II_SUMMARY.pdf)

<sup>40</sup> Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, *GPAC Annual Survey: Results* (Pittsburgh: Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, 2010),

[https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/Research/ArtistSurveyResultsSummary\\_11.08.13.pdf](https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/Research/ArtistSurveyResultsSummary_11.08.13.pdf)

high; area artists are active participants in local, regional and national art scenes; artists are involved in communities and have strong records for receiving national awards.<sup>41</sup>

However, the Pittsburgh art community faces several challenges for its vitality. Despite the majority of art organizations being smaller organizations, funding primarily goes to larger institutions. Pittsburgh ranks second out of 11 in Metro Areas in per capita funding from government sources. Yet, Pittsburgh ranks second in per capita funding from foundations, leading artists to question whether there has been a disproportionate amount of funding to large organizations.<sup>42</sup> This is even more disheartening given that 6.6% of all SWPA organizations serve specialized audiences, such as specific minority groups that often fall in the smaller organization category.<sup>43</sup> Furthermore, there has been a decrease of 4% from 2010 to 2015 of smaller organizations whose budget is \$250,000 or less. In contrast, very large organizations with budgets of \$10,000,000 or more increased by 8%.<sup>44</sup> Next, Pittsburgh actually ranks last in the number of new arts and culture organizations founded in 2000 or after compared to analogous cities.<sup>45</sup> Pittsburgh ranks quite low on the bohemian index, falling behind cities like Detroit, New Orleans, Cincinnati, and St. Louis.<sup>46</sup> Finally, only 12% of organizations are dedicated to community arts and education despite Pittsburgh's vast amount of arts organizations.<sup>47</sup>

Artists revealed threats and weaknesses in the Pittsburgh arts community in the 2013 SWOT survey. While many artists are optimistic about the area, 75% of artists reported significant challenges making a living in the area. 3 out of 4 artists stated they need help with marketing and self-promotion. Artists found themselves disillusioned with the traditional method of securing funds, grants, fellowships and donations from larger institutions. Finding affordable space to rehearse and present work was also a challenge. Finally, nearly half of the small arts organizations are artist-run, raising questions about whether the non-profit model is a sustainable model.<sup>48</sup>

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<sup>41</sup> Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, *A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis of the Pittsburgh Arts Community* (Pittsburgh: Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, 2010), [https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/Research/Artists\\_SWOT\\_Analysis\\_1.21.14.pdf](https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/Research/Artists_SWOT_Analysis_1.21.14.pdf)

<sup>42</sup> Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, *2016 Greater Pittsburgh Culture Counts* (Pittsburgh: Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, 2016), [https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/Culture\\_Count\\_final\\_draft\\_web.pdf](https://www.pittsburghartscouncil.org/storage/documents/Culture_Count_final_draft_web.pdf)

<sup>43</sup> Ibid.

<sup>44</sup> Ibid.

<sup>45</sup> Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, *Arts, Culture, & Economic Prosperity in Allegheny County*.

<sup>46</sup> Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, *Connecting Pittsburgh Creatives I & II: Summary*.

<sup>47</sup> Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, *2010 Southern Pennsylvania Culture Count*.

<sup>48</sup> Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, *A SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, Threats) Analysis*.

## ***Carnegie Mellon University and its Role***

### **The Glass Onion Mission**

The Glass Onion will exist as a small arts organization. It will provide accessibility and the necessary protocol to ensure audience members are safe and respectful to their neighbors. The Glass Onion will continue to further Allegheny County's artistic goals of being an economic engine for the region by showcasing local music and becoming a premier location for live music. The Glass Onion will give specialized organizations the ability to collaborate and work with new communities, thus helping newer organizations and providing a more inclusive message. The Glass Onion will provide accessible, high-quality, local entertainment and create educational experiences to explore the intersection arts, culture, and technology for Carnegie Mellon University students.

### ***Vision***

- To provide Carnegie Mellon students valuable experiential learning opportunities by managing a professional venue in Pittsburgh;
- to provide Oakland residents an accessible venue for supporting and engaging with the local music community;
- to enhance Pittsburgh's cultural capital by creating a premier location for showcasing music in its primary college area;
- to support local artists and residents; and
- to serve as an example for future investment and growth.

### ***Values***

- Diverse programming
- Student Accessibility
- Professionalism
- Interdisciplinary Collaboration

### ***The Glass Onion and Carnegie Mellon University***

The Glass Onion represents the intersection of arts and technology central to Carnegie Mellon's founding. Changes in the music industry with advances in technology like streaming have created a paradigm shift in the way music is consumed and

distributed.<sup>49</sup> Listeners are more invested in having access to music rather than consuming music. As a result, the industry has shifted toward an access-based economy, with artists earning most of their revenue from live performances instead of online streams. The Glass Onion provides students professional and learning opportunities to explore this new intersection of music and technology in accordance with the university's values, mission, and strategic plan.

The Glass Onion will exemplify the vision and mission of Carnegie Mellon University. The vision and mission of the University are stated below:

**Vision:** Carnegie Mellon University will have a transformative impact on society through continual innovation in education, research, creativity, and entrepreneurship

**Mission:** To create a transformative educational experience for students focused on deep disciplinary knowledge; problem solving; leadership, communication, and interpersonal skills; and personal health and well-being.

To cultivate a transformative university community committed to

- (a) attracting and retaining diverse, world-class talent;
- (b) creating a collaborative environment open to the free exchange of ideas, where research, creativity, innovation, and entrepreneurship can flourish; and
- (c) ensuring individuals can achieve their full potential.

To impact society in a transformative way — regionally, nationally, and globally — by engaging with partners outside the traditional borders of the university campus.<sup>50</sup>

With regard to Carnegie Mellon University's vision, The Glass Onion will dedicate itself to transforming society in an impactful way using Carnegie Mellon students' talents. By understanding the challenges the Pittsburgh arts community faces, and the demand for an alternative music space, the University can make a needed space to fight these challenges.

With regard to Carnegie Mellon University's mission, The Glass Onion will be an educational experience that draws on collaboration and interdisciplinary work to better the campus experience and the greater community. The venue will attract and retain diverse, world-class talent by featuring budding artists; the multifaceted and team-based approach lends itself to a free exchange of ideas from a variety of backgrounds

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<sup>49</sup> Billy Maupin (General Manager of Yep Roc Records), interview with author, July 7, 2016.

<sup>50</sup> "Vision & Mission," Carnegie Mellon University, last modified 2015, <http://www.cmu.edu/about/mission.html>



and experiences; this space will allow individuals to achieve their full potential in a professional opportunity that is not currently offered. Partners outside the university, namely other Pittsburgh art and community groups, will be impacted and bettered by The Glass Onion's work.

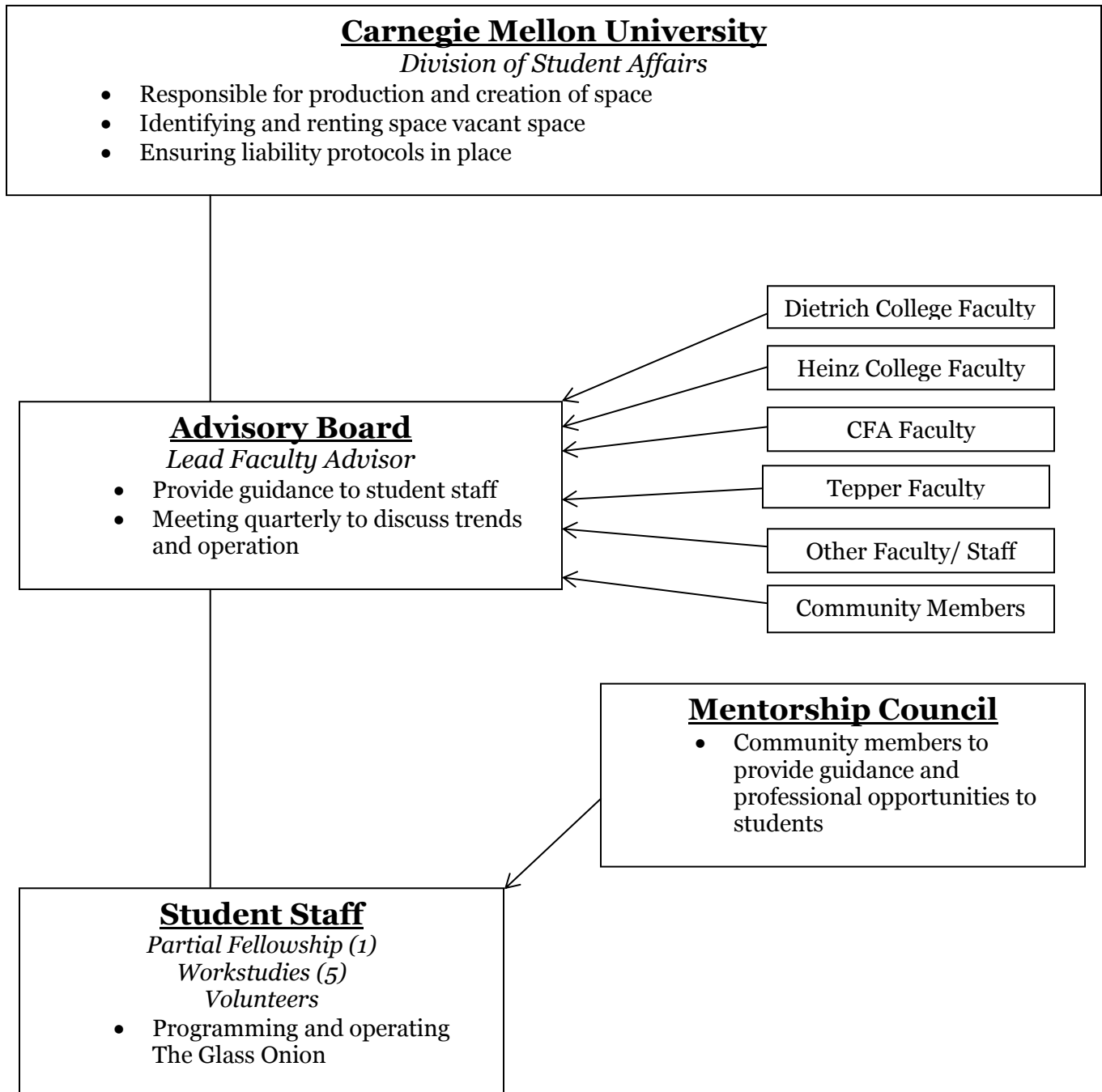
Planning even more specifically, The Glass Onion aligns with several of Carnegie Mellon University's goals for its 2025 strategic plan. It offers "direct apprentice and mentorship models," where students can work with current faculty, staff, and Pittsburgh community leaders. It directly "catalyzes interdisciplinary encounters and communication among all tiers of the Carnegie Mellon community." The low-cost and focus on feasibility exemplifies the focus on "efficient, effective, and nimble business practices." The Glass Onion can "incubate critical mass in emerging areas, specifically the intersection of the performing arts, culture, and technology." The venue expands the range of "innovative experiences offered to students," with new professional opportunities in entertainment management and production. Finally, the venue will "nurture and value new forms of academic expression." This venue stems directly out of an academic proposal, and can serve as an exemplar for creative work with a community impact that extends outside the constraints of traditional academic work.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>51</sup> "Strategic Plan 2025," Carnegie Mellon University, last modified 2015, <http://www.cmu.edu/strategic-plan/about/index.html>

# ***The Glass Onion Logistics***

## Organizational Structure



### *Carnegie Mellon Administration*

Carnegie Mellon administration will be responsible for the production and creation of the space. These responsibilities include: identifying or renting a vacant space for the venue; ensuring all liability, permit and insurance protocols are being met; coordinating financial operations such as workstudies; potentially identifying Advisory Board members.

Carnegie Mellon's Division of Student Affairs plays a unique role in organizing The Glass Onion. The Division of Student Affairs is committed to "student success in and out of the classroom," and creating a "holistic development of the student" that aligns with Carnegie Mellon's values of intellectual growth, artistic curiosity, personal well-being, professional acumen, leadership, social responsibility, and community engagement.<sup>52</sup> The Division of Student Affairs can work to ensure The Glass Onion meets these values. These efforts can include hosting discussions with students interested in developing the venue, learning more about the specific concerns students may express, and connecting different resources together throughout the campus for more efficient and collaborative work. The Glass Onion offers the Division of Student Affairs the opportunity to cultivate "deep and meaningful one-to-one relationships with students," "build collaborative relationships throughout the university," "create an engaged community with authentic exchanges," and "empower students to become architects of their own learning and development."<sup>53</sup>

### *Advisory Board*

The Advisory Board will embody direct apprenticeship and mentorship models. The Advisory Board will be comprised of at least five individuals. These individuals can be appointed by Carnegie Mellon University administration, proposed by students, or self-selected through specific colleges. These individuals will be a mix of community leaders, Oakland groups, faculty, and staff from across the university. The purpose of the advisory board is to bring in new perspectives, engage the Carnegie Mellon University community, and have individuals with a plethora of different backgrounds bringing their experience and ideas to The Glass Onion.

Board members are suggested from several colleges to catalyze interdisciplinary encounters and communication. These colleges were selected given their specific missions, undergraduate experiences, and expertise. It's self-evident the advisory role

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<sup>52</sup> "Vision, Mission, and Values," Carnegie Mellon University, last modified 2016, <http://www.cmu.edu/student-affairs/mission.html>.

<sup>53</sup> Ibid.

CFA, Tepper, and Heinz College can bring to the venue but Dietrich College shares an important role in the space. Dietrich College faculty has experience with cross-discipline collaborations to solve real-world problems. Given the nature of the space and the collaborative and interdisciplinary work expected to be conducted, faculty members with experience with managing these different expertise will be invaluable.<sup>54</sup> However, Advisory Board members do not only have to be selected from these colleges. Faculty and staff members from across the University will be able to join given their interest and commitment.

The board members will also include representation of local Oakland groups. This ensures local Oakland residents will have a voice in development, and express concerns such as underage drinking, noise violations, and more. In this way, the venue works in conjunction with larger Oakland development plans and the neighborhood's identity. There are several groups that could provide these kinds of input. Oakwatch, the neighborhood group formed to monitor disruptive properties, could have members represent Oakland resident concerns over having a local music venue in the area. Other community groups include the OPDC, the Oakland Task Force (OTF) that is dedicated to improving program through project implementation, the Oakland Business Improvement District (OBID) that works to make the area a hub of innovation and technology, and the Community Human Services (CHS) that seeks to maximize the well-being of Oakland residents.<sup>55</sup>

Having liaisons from other communities can provide input and coordination for The Glass Onion along with other local initiatives. For example, the Shadyside Chamber of Commerce hosts events to promote local culture in the area, such as Jam on Walnut and Run Shadyside.<sup>56</sup> The Pittsburgh Downtown Partnership recently stated interest in creating more music venues to create a city with “a robust music life” and organized panel discussions with local stakeholders.<sup>57</sup> By partnering with these initiatives, The Glass Onion can have a place in larger Pittsburgh discussions and development. Community liaisons should include individuals familiar with larger institutional funding. This may mean having a representative from The Cultural Trust, Heinz Foundation, or Pittsburgh Foundation to help The Glass Onion operate within a competitive arts scene and find support from these groups. This liaison may be a Carnegie Mellon faculty member. Having input from these individuals can prove invaluable for The Glass Onion to grow and seek larger institutional support.

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<sup>54</sup> “About,” Dietrich College of Humanities and Social Sciences, accessed March 8, 2017, <http://www.cmu.edu/dietrich/about/index.html>

<sup>55</sup> “Oakland Partners,” University of Pittsburgh, last modified 2017, <http://www.cgr.pitt.edu/oakland-partners>

<sup>56</sup> “2017 Calendar of Events,” Shadyside Chamber of Commerce, last modified 2017, <http://thinkshadyside.com/events/>

<sup>57</sup> Scott Mervis, “Downtown Partnership wants more nightlife options in Golden Triangle,” *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, March 8, 2017, <http://www.post-gazette.com/ae/music/2017/03/08/Pittsburgh-Downtown-Partnership-pushing-for-more-nightlife-music-options-in-Golden-Triangle/stories/201703080188>

Advisory Board responsibilities will focus on long-term vision and management of the space. Advisory Board members will not be directly related to day-to-day operations of programming, finances, maintaining the space, etc. This allows community and Carnegie Mellon members to be involved on a more flexible level. Instead, Advisory Board members will meet quarterly to discuss operations and trends. Finally, Advisory Board members will not be monetarily compensated for their time. However, they may be given other benefits such as free admission to events, subsidized rental fees of the space, etc.

The ideal board member would be an individual experienced in the field that they wish to provide guidance. For example, a faculty member from Tepper could provide guidance on marketing or budgets; a faculty member from Dietrich could provide guidance on grant-writing or community outreach; a CFA faculty member could provide guidance on designing graphics or sound design of the space itself. For a full list of potential board members, please see Part IV, Section C.

From the Advisory Board, one member will be selected to be the faculty advisor for the student staff.

### *Faculty Advisor*

The faculty advisor serves one of the most crucial roles by ensuring the success of students and The Glass Onion. First, the advisor should be invested in The Glass Onion. Although student turnover may vary, the faculty advisor will be a more permanent position and require continuing interest in the space and its projects. Next, they would be responsible for long-term planning of the space. The faculty advisor's should guide and select students who can implement this vision. Third, the advisor will have the final say on hiring and terminating student staff. It is the advisor's responsibility to ensure that students are dedicated to the space's values, and remove those students who do not follow their duties. Fourth, the faculty advisor should be a capable facilitator. Especially in earlier stages, conversations about the future of a space and its programming direction may cause tension. It is crucial that the faculty advisor is able to direct students through difficult scenarios, but do so in a nonbiased and helpful manner. Finally, the faculty advisor has the duty to provide The Advisory Board with status reports, and to immediately report any potential situations that could be dangerous or inappropriate. One concern that arose is compensation of the faculty advisor for his or her commitment. Although this compensation may not be monetary, the faculty advisor may be able to lower their course-load instead.

### *Mentorship Council*

The Mentorship Council draws on the talent and expertise of the local Pittsburgh community to mentor students in professional roles. These mentors would be able to dedicate their time as they wanted and work out flexible schedules with the group or select individuals. For example, a Pittsburgh production company could provide guidance on social media and producing shows; a lighting and design company could provide guidance on how to set a stage. In this way, students are networking with professionals that could lead to future professional opportunities.

### *Student Staff*

The Glass Onion will provide innovative experiences, professional experiences, and nurture new forms of academic expression for all students of Carnegie Mellon University. Unlike other spaces, The Glass Onion will use both undergraduate and graduate students to increase available opportunities. Graduate students are just a fraction of the Carnegie Mellon Student Body. The value of accessibility should extend to all opportunities of working at the venue. Second, many undergraduates are qualified for administrative positions. The Frame Gallery hires undergraduates to manage its own show schedule and space. Activities Board is entirely composed of undergraduates who are trained to work with individual budgets over \$40,000 and coordinate events for thousands of people. Opening positions to undergraduate and graduate students creates more competition to pick the most qualified candidate. Individuals working at the venue should be the most passionate, have the most potential, and be the most qualified to work in such a position. Employing undergraduate students increases the recognition of the space among students. By drawing from a spectrum of students, the space avoids being pigeonholed into being a “Heinz Space,” a “CFA space,” etc. Instead, a more diverse staff will create more diverse audiences and more diverse interactions among the community. Undergraduate students will have the opportunity to more actively explore professional opportunities. Students enrolled in graduate programs have clearer conceptions of their professional path and career. However, working at a music venue as an undergraduate could be a formative experience that leads them choosing a different professional route than their undergraduate education would usually entail.

I have separated several tiers of student staff: Tuition Stipend, workstudies, and volunteers.

#### A. Tuition Stipend- Executive Director (1)

The Executive Director will be the highest ranking student staff member, and act directly below the Faculty Advisor. Responsibilities for the organization include

creating strategic plans, community outreach, Executive Board evaluations, and facilitating meetings. The Executive Director will meet weekly with the Faculty Advisor, and run separate weekly Executive Board meetings. This individual will also report any larger issues or concerns to the Faculty Advisor, and serve as an additional facilitator among chairs if needed. The Executive Director can also sit-in on hiring interviews, and give feedback about candidates to the Faculty Director.

Given these responsibilities, the Executive Director will most likely be a graduate Heinz student in the MAM or MEIM programs. These students will have the professional background and experience needed to run a non-profit music venue. However, qualified undergraduates should still apply.

The Executive Director will be paid via a partial fellowship. Currently, Future Tenant offers its Executive Director a full fellowship. However, this may create too much of a gap between positions, and deter students from applying to other Executive Board positions.<sup>58</sup> Instead, a partial fellowship could fill this gap to compensate the Executive Director more for their increased responsibility, but not deter interest in other positions. This partial fellowship could be a percentage of one's tuition or a flat rate.

## B. Workstudies

Workstudies will be hired to staff The Glass Onion. These students would be the primary staff responsible for executive decisions of the venue. There are six outlined paid positions:

(2) Programming Directors - These individuals work collaboratively to help book acts for the venue. Responsibilities entail submitting contracts, reaching out to artists, and working closely with the Faculty Advisor to ensure events follow the values of the university and the space. The programming directors will be the point-people for questions during events. This is ideal for students who have experience managing events and have strong leadership skills.

(1): Finance Chair – This individual will handle budgets and finances. Responsibilities include ensuring The Glass Onion is financially sound, and working closely with other chairs and the Faculty Advisor to allocate budgets. The Finance Chair will also look for potential funding sources and opportunities. This

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<sup>58</sup> Jerry Coltin (Future Tenant Faculty Advisor), interview with author, March 1, 2017.

position is ideal for highly organized students with budgeting experience.

(1) Production Chair – This individual will be in charge of show production. Responsibilities include organizing sound system, light design, and any other potential show requests. The Production Chair will have to balance creativity and feasibility, and find low-cost ways to make sure shows look and sound great. This position is ideal for students with experience designing stage spaces, or has tech experience in the field.

(1) Marketing Chair - This individual will be in charge of promoting shows, managing social media accounts, and updating the website. Other responsibilities include designing posters, and delegating tasks out. This position is ideal for students with design experience, and previous PR experience.

(1) Venue Manager Chair - This individual will be in charge of general support the venue. Responsibilities include ensuring general facilities are operational, being the point person for issues relating to repairing and fixing equipment, acquiring new equipment as needed, and designing the venue space. During events, the Venue Manager will run the front of house, and coordinate volunteers to help with seating and ticketing. The Venue Manager will not be solely responsible for maintaining the venue. Rather, they will coordinate efforts across the entire staff to ensure the venue is kept clean and is respectful of other neighbors. The individual will also work with respective campus groups, such as Facilities Management Services [FMS] to ensure proper guidelines and work orders are met. This position is ideal for someone with a background in designing larger spaces, and who can balance different priorities.

These six positions will serve as the Executive Board of The Glass Onion. Each member would be required to attend weekly meetings with other board members, a biweekly meeting with the Faculty Advisor, report all potential issues, and be at Glass Onion events.

Each position will be a workstudy paid position. Each undergraduate student would receive a wage of \$10/hour. Graduate students would earn a wage of \$15/hour. Students must reapply for their positions at the end of the academic year, and will not be automatically rehired. If a student is terminated before their position ends, then the Executive Director will act in his or her place until a replacement is found.



### C. Volunteers

Students will also be able to volunteer at The Glass Onion. The volunteer option has several benefits. First, students who apply for positions but are not hired will be able to help at the venue. Second, students who may be interested in helping but cannot commit to a full-time Executive Board role can still be involved. Third, volunteers can learn valuable experiences working at the venue and if they choose to apply, can be highly qualified candidates for Executive Board positions in the future. Fourth, volunteers could receive internship or course-credit and design a project or schedule that benefits The Glass Onion. In this way, volunteers can still have access to the interdisciplinary encounters, and professional opportunities provided by The Glass Onion.

The purpose of volunteers is to supplement additional help to The Executive Board in any areas they deem necessary. This may include helping out events, working with the Design chair to design posters, PRing events etc. Although volunteers' schedules are more flexible than Executive Board members, they must still receive approval from the Faculty Director. At this meeting volunteers should discuss the total hours they wish to work and any goals they have by volunteering.

Two areas of concern raised by stakeholders were accountability and filling positions.<sup>59</sup> The first area of concern was accountability. Previous projects, such as Future Tenant, have faced challenges of keeping full-time undergraduate students actively engaged in the space, and held responsible to their obligations. Students may begin to treat their role as a low priority or quit if their workload becomes too high. There are several potential remedies for these concerns. First, the Faculty Advisor and Executive Director should be actively engaged in reminding Executive Board members of their privilege and commitment to the Carnegie Mellon and Pittsburgh community. Second, it would be beneficial to combine professional opportunity with academic coursework. Future Tenant is implementing a model where students spend time in a graded course strategizing for their year ahead, and their paid work is implementation of their game plan.<sup>60</sup> Using a similar model for The Glass Onion may create an academic course specifically targeted for employees or have the job be registered as an independent study.

The second area of concern was filling positions. This concern was raised by Kathryn Heidmann, who questioned the viability of filling every student position.<sup>61</sup> This

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<sup>59</sup> Jerry Coltin, interview with author, March 1, 2017. : Kathryn J. Heidmann (Assistant Dean for MAM and MEIM Programs), interview with author, February 15, 2017.

<sup>60</sup> Ibid.

<sup>61</sup> Kathryn J. Heidmann, interview with author, February 15, 2017.

scenario could occur for several reasons. A student may quit or be fired from their position during the year; if the proposal is enacted, there may not be enough funding to support all seven positions; there may not be enough interest early on to fill all seven positions. There are several alternatives to offer in these scenarios. If a student quits or is fired, the Executive Director acts in that student's position until it is filled. For the remaining two scenarios, there is some flexibility allowed in the number of positions available. Although it would be ideal to have all seven positions, the responsibilities of certain positions could be distributed among the other chairs. For example, the responsibilities of the Finance Chair could be a combined group and individual effort, with each position keeping their own records and budgets being reviewed at weekly meetings. The Venue Manager chair could also be a group effort, with individuals taking personal action on keeping maintenance and running front of house. Even in the early stages of the development it may be possible to have only programming director.

### Programming

The Glass Onion will be a critical space to explore the intersection of arts, culture, and technology. With these goals in mind, The Glass Onion's should focus on showcasing emerging local talent that will engage students with the larger Pittsburgh artistic community. The focus of the programming should not be on bringing large regional or national acts, but supporting local music. With these values in mind, The Glass Onion could be used to program a wide variety of local art. At its core, The Glass Onion is planned to be a music venue, and should be used accordingly. However, this does not mean other art could not be showcased. For example, local artists could display their work during shows, open-mics could be held that showcase spoken word, literary readings, etc. However, all events should be accessible, of a high quality, and engage local talent.

### *Programming Process*

The programming process will include community suggestions, and be largely led by the two programming directors. Despite there being directors for programming, community involvement should be a central part of deciding who to showcase at The Glass Onion. This includes talking to Executive Board members, having calls for artists, and letting artists know about open dates. Once interested acts have been accumulated, the programming directors should decide which acts to move forward with. Considerations on items like pricing, popularity, and availability should be taken into account. Commercial criteria include popularity in the local community and student interest. Artistic criteria include artists who explore the intersection of arts, culture, and technology in unique ways, novelty, and artists who have not performed at the space

before. After concerts audience members will be given the opportunity to provide feedback anonymously to help improve future programming requests.

The programming directors will make the final say on which acts are booked with the Faculty Advisor having the ability to block requests. Once requests are made, they should be taken through the appropriate avenues (most likely Carnegie Mellon contract offices) to ensure a document is in place outlining the event logistics. Ideally, calendars should be planned several weeks, if not a month or two, in advance to allow for ideal marketing and publicity.

## Marketing

Following programming, one of the most important aspects of the Executive Board will be marketing shows. This responsibility falls under the Marketing Chair, and entail coordinating across physical and online mediums to reach audiences.

One crucial element of marketing will be using physical mediums to promote events. Physical mediums include posters, handbills, calendars, and show flyers. These physical documents will be distributed at universities, local stores, restaurants, and more. Depending on how far in advance programming is determined, calendars with full season calendars can also be produced and hung at the venue as well.

A second form of marketing is online platforms. Given newer trends with younger audiences, it is crucial that The Glass Onion is able to effectively market events online. Discussions with Jerry Coltin, the current faculty advisor of Future Tenant, demonstrated that marketing has a huge impact on how events are perceived by audience members and the community.<sup>62</sup> More importantly, effective marketing will mean utilizing new media forms, specifically social media, as the primary way of connecting with audiences. This means using social media outlets such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and Snapchat to engage with audiences. These outlets could be used to engage audiences by promoting shows, but also streaming events live and holding unique social media contests. For example, individuals could win tickets to a concert by sharing social media posts or “liking” a specific page. Another innovative way of using an online platform would be building an app for mobile use. Having a dedicated app could keep individuals up to date, provide custom notifications for upcoming events, and potentially allowing ticket purchases. Finally, The Glass Onion should have a dedicated website. This website could serve as a hub for all events and ticket purchases, but could also serve as an archive for events. Individuals could not only see upcoming events, but explore previous events and find artists who may have gained more attention after playing The Glass Onion.

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<sup>62</sup> Jerry Coltin, interview with author, March 1, 2017.

## ***Development***

The Glass Onion will be an efficient, effective, and nimble business. Initial development should be as low-cost as possible, feasible, and flexible. These first two values are self-explanatory: attempting to propose a massive music venue in the heart of Oakland is neither cost-sensitive nor feasible. However, development flexibility is an idea that came after meeting with CMU officials Gina Casalegno, John Hannon, and Sarah Bush<sup>63</sup>. Initially I had taken a space-based approach. This approach focused on finding specific locations within Oakland and proposing how these locations could be developed into viable spaces. However, after talking to these stakeholders it became clear that this approach would not be successful. First, the Oakland market is highly competitive. Finding “ideal” spaces would be extremely difficult in itself. Second, if these spaces were available, the chances that they would stay available throughout an entire funding and development process were also extremely slim. As a result, I chose to be flexible by proposing a general development plan. This plan is written such that it could be implemented in a variety of spaces. However, this flexibility also means that many of the numbers provided in my budget are general estimates. Only after procuring the exact location can these numbers be given more specificity given the dimensions and needs of the space.

The cost of space is the largest obstacle preventing the implementation of this idea. The most feasible and inexpensive way to overcome this obstacle is by using a CMU-owned building. The Glass Onion does not need a permanent residence. Instead, it can act as a “pop-up” venue in its early stages. As a pop-up, The Glass Onion requires a potentially temporary space to test its structure and demonstrate its feasibility for future investment. Similar projects like Conflict Kitchen began by starting in smaller, cheaper locations and then finding more permanent locations.<sup>64</sup> The Glass Onion could operate as a pop-up venue in a CMU-owned building slated for future development. Nearly all other aspects of the venue are flexible- from programming, chair positions, facilities, and more- yet none of these are possible without some accommodation on the administration’s end for building use.

### **Risks, Legality, Safety**

Although the initial stages of The Glass Onion are proposed as a potential temporary pop-up space, it is fully intended to operate within CMU’s liability, insurance, risk, and safety policies. One of the main motivations of creating this space is to provide

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<sup>63</sup> John Hannon and Gina Casalegno (Associate Vice President and Dean of Student Affairs, and Associate Dean of Student Affairs respectively), interview with author, January 6, 2017; Sarah Bush (Associate Vice President of Real Estate), interview with author, January 3, 2017.

<sup>64</sup> John Hannon and Gina Casalegno, interview with author, January 6, 2017.

a safe place for students to engage with local musicians and artists. Safety is a core concern when assessing the construction or use of any vacant building or lot.

Lt. Joseph Meyers, Commander of CMUPD, discussed several security concerns.<sup>65</sup> Lt. Meyers stated the venue's potential location in Oakland would make it easy for officers to patrol and secure the area. This would lower potential costs and avoid the need to use Pittsburgh PD. However, concerns about the inclusion of non-CMU members, risks of drug and alcohol use, and curfews were raised. To address these concerns, The Glass Onion will follow all the necessary security protocols as mandated by the University for these events. Given the nature of the space being targeted for youth and the larger community, there are obvious concerns balancing safety and creating an effective alternative space where students feel comfortable. Currently, all artists that perform at Carnegie Mellon University through Activities Board must agree to extensive liability documentation that outlines proper conduct. Activities Board also follows policies where students do not handle potentially dangerous scenarios alone. For example, if an individual is suspected of intoxication or drug use at an AB event, AB members notify a school official who handles the situation through proper CMU protocol. This same level of safety and preparation should be taken for local artists. Students should be aware of changing protocols as enforced by Carnegie Mellon University and the City. For example, new rules on activities like vaping or the use of e-cigarettes mean their ban from the space. These protocols should also be flexible to challenges faced by the venue. For example, if neighborhood residents complain about food litter or excessive cigarette butts, banning or creating stricter consumption regulations for these items may be enforced. As a note, drug and alcohol use are strictly prohibited in the space that is slated to be accessible for all ages or 18+.

Another concern is ensuring that the building has the proper licensing and permits to operate a music venue. This is crucial to distinguish the pop-up space from other DIY spaces, and to keep the building up to code. Some licenses include:

- Amusement License
- Occupancy Permit
- BMI Licenses (for performance, although these may already be covered by CMU's prior agreements)<sup>66</sup>

Licenses will vary depending on the actual space being used and its condition. Certain spaces will already have these licenses and permits in place, while others will require more work depending on their status. These specific concerns can be addressed

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<sup>65</sup> Joseph Meyers (Commander, Operational Services, Carnegie Mellon Police), interview with author, March 1, 2017.

<sup>66</sup> Ellen Arnold, Neil Benish, Amanda Cotton, Monica Glockner, Josh Halko, Myungsun Ko, Juniper Leherissey, et. al., "The Future Tenant Operations Manual" (Senior Capstone Synthesis Project., MAM Program, unpublished manuscript, Fall 2013).

once a space is identified and handled by the appropriate avenues at Carnegie Mellon University.

### The Ideal Space

Describing the ideal space may help when estimating costs. However, these specifications are flexible and are not requirements. Rather, they are estimates given knowledge of local music venues and conversations with individuals who have experience in constructing similar spaces.

- Square Feet: ~1000 sq. ft to accommodate a stage and 50-100 people comfortably
- Ceiling Height: Adequate clearance needed for speakers and individuals. Having 1-2 feet above speakers.
- Non-carpeted floors: Decreases maintenance
- Bathrooms: Two bathrooms for use, minimum one unisex

### Costs

Costs for the venue can be divided into four primary categories: marketing, programming, facilities, and administrative. Generally, specific costs were found by contacting the appropriate producers or using reference points from other venues.

EXPENSE			COST	NOTES
<b>Administrative</b>				
	<i>Rent*</i>			
		*CMU Space	\$2,000	Costs vary widely dependent on space
		*Renting	\$24,500	Costs vary widely dependent on space
	<i>Payroll</i>			
		Executive Director	\$10,000	Potential tuition stipend
		Workstudies	\$8,450	Calculation given as estimate. Calculated by averaging undergraduate and graduate wages (\$12.5 per hour) multiplied by total hours of week (9) , total employees (5), and total weeks in academic year (15)
		Volunteers	\$0	
<b>TOTAL:</b>		<b>Renting Space</b>	<b>\$42,950</b>	
		<b>CMU SPACE</b>	<b>\$20,450</b>	
<b>Equipment</b>				
	<i>Stage</i>			
		Rent	\$350/day	
		Buy	\$4,000	
	<i>Lights</i>			
		Rent	\$200/show	
		Buy	\$1,500	
	<i>Sound</i>			

		Rent	\$600/day with tech.		
		Buy	\$15,000		
	<i>Chairs (100)</i>				
		Rent	\$150		
		Buy	\$2,000		
	<i>Back-Drop</i>				
		Rent	\$100		
		Buy	\$1,500		
<b>TOTAL:</b>			<b>\$24,000</b>		Assumes Buying
<b>Programming</b>					
	<i>Artist Stipend</i>				Artists may play for door instead of guaranteed amount
		Stipend	\$3,000		
	<i>Marketing</i>				
		Online Advertisement	\$2000		
		Online Press	Free		
		Physical Posters	\$500		
<b>TOTAL:</b>			<b>\$5,500</b>		
<b>Miscellaneous</b>					
	<i>Cleaning Supplies</i>		\$175		
	<i>Tools</i>		\$400		
<b>TOTAL:</b>			<b>\$575</b>		
<b>OVERALL TOTAL COST</b>		<b>RENTING SPACE</b>	<b>\$73,025</b>		
		<b>CMU SPACE</b>	<b>\$50,525</b>		



### *Administrative*

Administrative items are highest cost and directly deal with running the venue. “Payroll” and “Rent” are two items that are not only the most expensive, but require some more discussion.

Payroll can be split into two categories: workstudies and the executive director tuition stipend. These correlate with the same split in the kinds of leadership opportunities outlined above. Workstudy costs were calculated by taking the average hourly rate of graduate and undergraduate workers, multiplying it by the total number of hours each staff member would work, and the total number of staff members in that price bracket. For the executive director remission, I estimated a stipend of \$10,000.

Rent is one of the more flexible costs in the budget. Discussions with Ellen Romagni, the Director of Business Operations at Campus Design, gave insight into the way rent costs can change drastically.<sup>67</sup> First, Oakland is a highly competitive submarket, with spaces and prices constantly in flux. Second, the type of space I’m looking for will change costs—specifically, my ideal space would be an Assembly, Type C or below. Third, there are price differences if this space is to be held in a currently existing Carnegie Mellon University space or will be rented from an outside party. If it is being rented from an outside party, Ms. Romagni stated a general metric may be \$19 to \$30 per square foot annually. For a 1000 square foot space, this leaves rent at \$19,000 to \$30,000 annually. However, it is extraordinarily cheaper to utilize a current Carnegie Mellon space. With this process, the only costs to rent are determined by the department that owns the space. For example, Future Tenant charges \$100 to rent their space, with \$40 returned if the space is left in good shape.<sup>68</sup> Using this estimate, I estimated using CMU space at \$2000.

### *Equipment*

The second-highest cost category is equipment. These quotes were provided by Cory Cope.<sup>69</sup> Expenses were separated by renting or purchasing equipment costs. For the cost calculations, I assumed equipment would be purchased because it would save cost in the long-term. However, equipment costs can be saved in other ways as well. For example, equipment can be purchased used from other sources. Also, using existing Carnegie Mellon equipment can save cost. AB Tech has a supply of sound equipment

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<sup>67</sup> Ellen Romagni (Director of Business Operations, Carnegie Mellon Campus Design and Facility Development), interview with author, March 1, 2017.

<sup>68</sup> Joni Sullivan (student employee at The Frame Gallery), interview with author, March 3, 2017.

<sup>69</sup> Cory Cope (Flyspace Productions), interview with author, April 7, 2017

that can be rented as well.

### *Programming*

Programming costs are the expenses to provide, operate, and manage programming at the venue. The two primary expenses are artist stipends and marketing

Artist stipends are compensation for musicians who play at the venue. A recent 2016 Berklee College of Music analysis shows that musicians who play these events make \$75-\$125 per gig.<sup>70</sup> However, not all of these costs come directly from the venue. Instead, many venues offer artists a combination of door charge or a pre-determined guarantee. This is especially true in the local alternative music scene, where a majority of local bands will perform for some percentage of the door. As the Berklee analysis states, artist payment will vary depending on the size of the band, their reputation, the venue itself, audience size, and more.

Online tickets are an integral part of running the venue, but its fees may vary depending on what service is being used.<sup>71</sup> For example, Carnegie Mellon University currently uses Carnegie Mellon Tickets as a way for student organizations and groups to sell tickets to the Carnegie Mellon community. However, Future Tenant uses Brown Paper Tickets for their ticket sales. Other services include Artful.ly, a ticketing website geared toward smaller arts organizations, and RABBL, a service used at James Street Gastropub and Speakeasy. These services do not cost money to use, but do have transaction fees for buyers. Depending on which services are preferred by administration, are easiest to implement, and offer the best features for customers will determine which service is used.<sup>72</sup>

Marketing costs are important to the overall success of the venue. These correlate to buying advertisements on social media platforms and some physical flyers. Online and email press includes news and blog outlets that allow users to submit events for free listing.

### Funding Sources

Below is a brief list of funding sources from Carnegie Mellon University and other Pittsburgh sources.

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<sup>70</sup> Career Development Center, Berklee College of Music. *Music Careers in Dollars and Cents, 2016 Edition* (Boston: Berklee College of Music, 2016),

<https://www.berklee.edu/sites/default/files/Music%20Careers%20in%20Dollars%20and%20Cents%202016-rh.pdf>

<sup>71</sup> Brett Ashley Crawford, Danielle Gewurz, Stewart Urist, Kristen Sorek West, and Christine Sajewski, *2015 Ticketing Software Satisfaction Survey* (Pittsburgh: Research Center of the Master of Arts Management Program, June 2015), <https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51d98be2e4b05a25fc200cbc/t/55d4b3fae4b07ad2f825a3a0/1440003066744/Surveydoc.pdf>

<sup>72</sup> Brett Ashley Crawford, Danielle Gewurz, Stewart Urist, Kristen Sorek West, and Christine Sajewski *2015 Ticketing Software Satisfaction Survey*.

### *Carnegie Mellon University*

Besides funds from the Division of Student Affairs and other campus administration divisions, there are several sources for funding The Glass Onion. One source of funding is the individual colleges involved in managing the space. For example, Kathryn Heidmann stated although the MAM program could not contribute to fully developing the space, they could contribute funds for hiring MAM workstudies.<sup>73</sup> These kinds of financial commitments from individual colleges could lessen overall costs from a specific division of the school.

A variety of alumni networks also exist for funding. The Andrew Carnegie Society Scholars allocate funding each year to support student initiatives. CMU Crowdfunding also provides a platform for current students and alumni to donate to causes online. Other alumni may be interested in the space and be willing to donate funds for its Onion but keeps alumni engaged in contributing to the University's projects.

Finally, new initiatives are always being created to fund projects to better the campus experience. Recently, Provost Jahanian announced the new Uplift CMU challenge. This challenge provides up to \$20,000 in funding for initiatives designed to utilize unused campus to better the campus experience. These kinds of initiatives may be less regular sources of funding, but can be utilized for specific development missions.

### *Pittsburgh Institutions*

There are several sources for outside institutional funding. Institutions like the Greater Pittsburgh Arts Council, The Heinz Foundation, The Mellon Foundation, and The Pittsburgh Foundation have grants able to fund new initiatives to improve Pittsburgh's arts scene. However, other smaller organizations also provide valuable grants for developing ideas. The SPROUT fund has an array of grants available each year to fund different initiatives as they pertain to community development.<sup>74</sup> Other grants also include the Awesome Foundation and the Up and Comin' Grant from the Ace Hotel and Martin Guitars. These grants are also targeted toward community development and the arts.

Another source of outside institutional funding is city government. One reason the Oakland music scene died was due to ramifications and lack of support from city policies. Engaging the city in developing this venue may also be a viable method of financial support. Supporting the Glass Onion means supporting growth of the arts community. Councilman Dan Gilman of City District 8 expressed his support for this

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<sup>73</sup> Kathryn Heidmann, interview with author, March 6, 2017.

<sup>74</sup> <http://www.sproutfund.org/apply/>

proposal and the venue.<sup>75</sup> Further conversations with city stakeholders can lead to collaboration and developing The Glass Onion as a venue with city support.

Private business may also have interest in supporting new arts spaces. Development corporations, stores, and other businesses can benefit from the positive publicity working with a new community-based music venue can bring. Besides just donating money, private businesses may also be able to donate services. For example, partnering with a local print shop could save money on publicity materials or a local production company with set design.

### Sample Material

This sample material includes a potential venue concept, and highlights individuals for positions such as faculty advisors and the mentorship council. Regarding the potential venue concepts, I utilized an existing space, 205 North Craig Street, that I believed could have been transformed into an early-stage pop-up venue. This space is not currently vacant, but is used as a model. This model demonstrates that current CMU spaces that exist can 1) be used as a pop-up music venue and 2) promote CMU to view future vacant spaces as areas of opportunity to explore the intersection of arts, culture, and technology. For the individuals I highlighted for specific positions, I used my personal experiences and knowledge of these individuals' expertise to create a brief list. However, there are a wide net of individuals that could be great advisors who may not be included on this list. The purpose of this sample material is to strengthen my vision for the space, and give working material for early development teams to utilize.

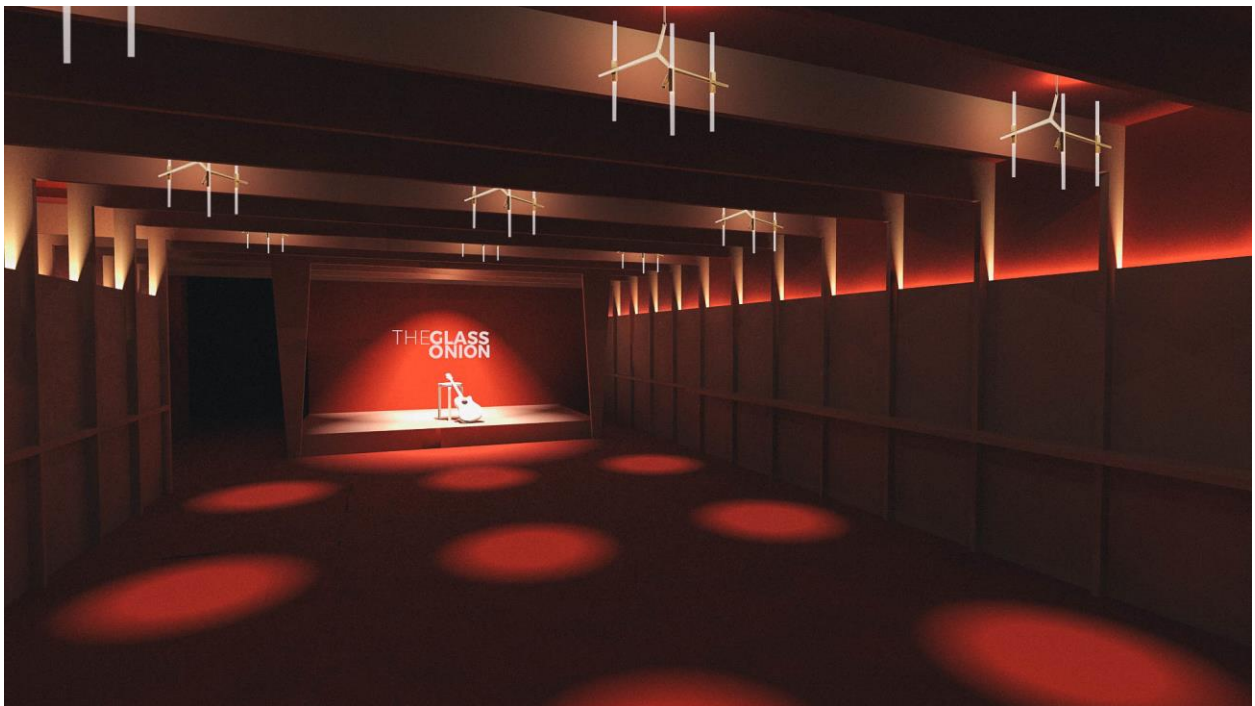
### *Position Recommendations*

<b>Name</b>	<b>Experience</b>	<b>Position</b>
Germaine Williams	Faculty; Chief Executive Officer of Pittsburgh Center for the Arts	Advisory Board Member
Riccardo Schulz	Faculty; Head of Vlahakis Recording Studio	Advisory Board Member
Brett Ashley Crawford	Faculty; Assistant Teaching Professor of Arts Management	Advisory Board Member
Benjamin Opie	Faculty; Music Technology	Advisory Board Member
David Shumway	Faculty; English Department	Advisory Board Member

<sup>75</sup> Dan Gilman (Councilman of Pittsburgh Council District 8), interview with author, November 30, 2016.

Jeff Betten	Head of MISRA Record Label	Mentorship Council
Ben Penigar	Grey Area Productions Manager	Mentorship Council
Dan Law	Head of Thrival Productions	Mentorship Council
Robert Blattberg	Faculty; Center for Marketing Technology and Innovation	Advisory Board Member

*Proposed Space- 205 North Craig Street*



## ***Conclusion***

Regarding the future of this proposal, I believe that Carnegie Mellon University has the resources available to make this venue into a reality. The immediate next steps for this proposal will be to identify a viable space, and conduct the initial work needed to make this space safe and able to hold events. Finding faculty members to act as advisors and opening up student applications will be the next task. However, once the venue has begun its operation, it should become increasingly self-sufficient.

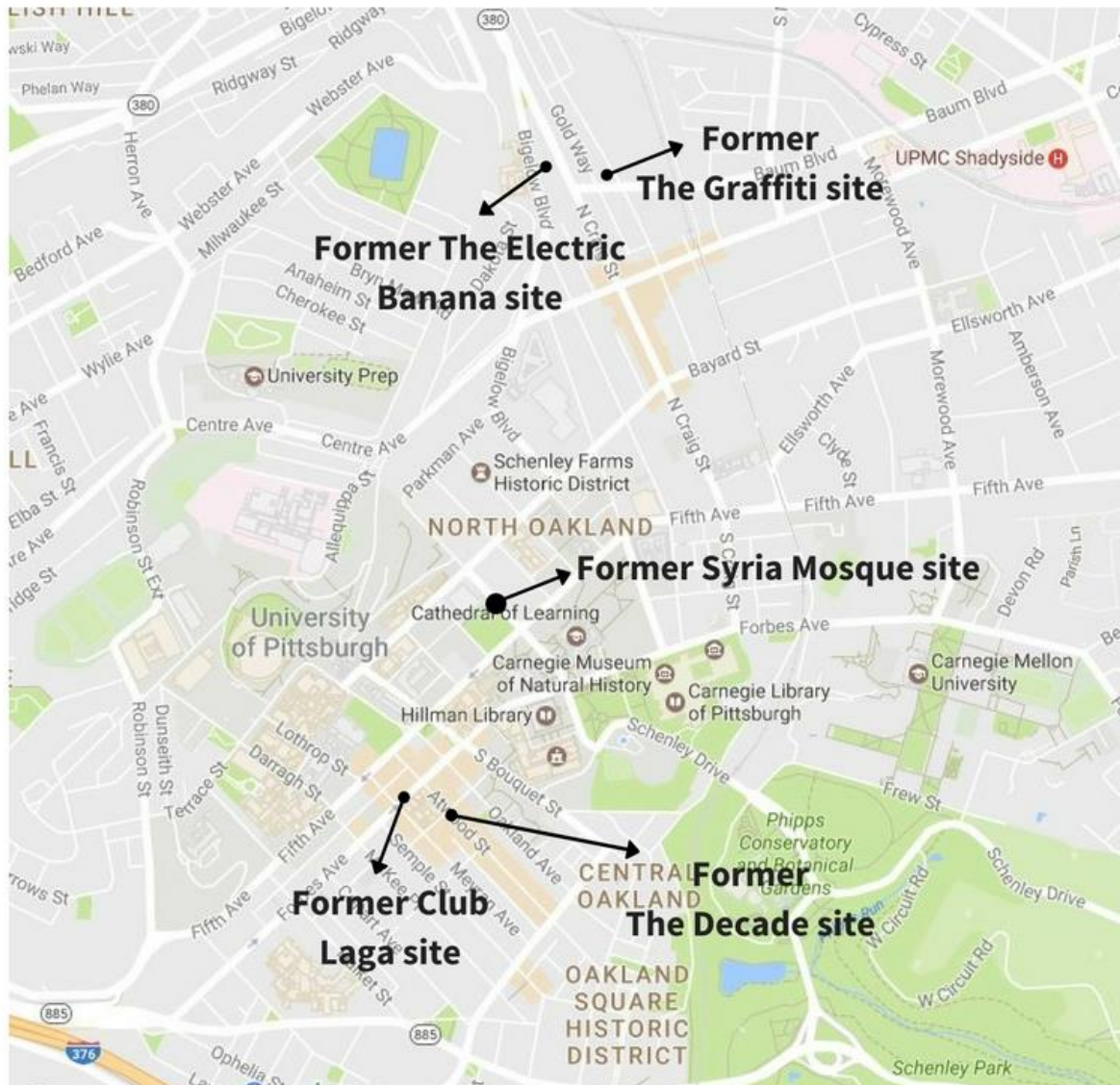
There are several gaps that can be used for further research. First, research can be done to analyze similar efforts by other universities. Second, more thorough research on outside funding sources in Pittsburgh and regionally. Third, more research finding potential venue spaces in Oakland. As the author of this proposal, I would be interested in continuing to push this proposal forward. I am staying in Pittsburgh through 2018, and would be more than able to dedicate my time and energy to this idea further. Although this proposal is the result of my Honors Thesis work, I would meet with additional stakeholders, and adjusting logistics as needed.

The Glass Onion will serve as a model for future investment into cultural spaces. Carnegie Mellon University is just one anchor institution in the Oakland area. Other universities like the University of Pittsburgh, Chatham University, and Carlow stand to gain their own valuable insight and experience from this example. Especially if the venue is successful in its early stages, proposing mixed stakeholder investment in creating a permanent, dedicated space could engage an even larger Pittsburgh community.

## **Appendices**

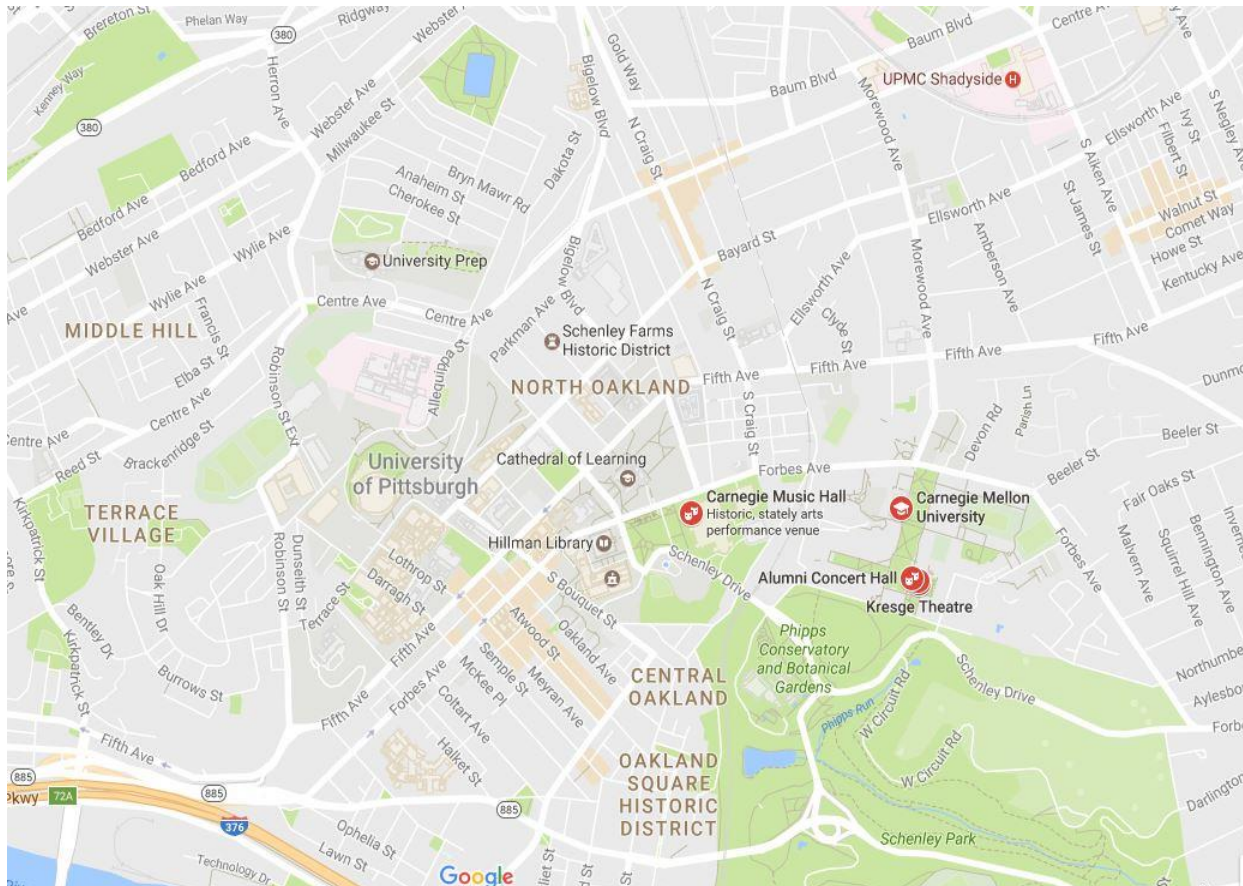


## Appendix 1



This map created by the author shows the close proximity of several former prominent venues in the Oakland area. These venues are Club Laga, The Decade, the Syria Mosque, The Electric Banana, and The Graffiti.

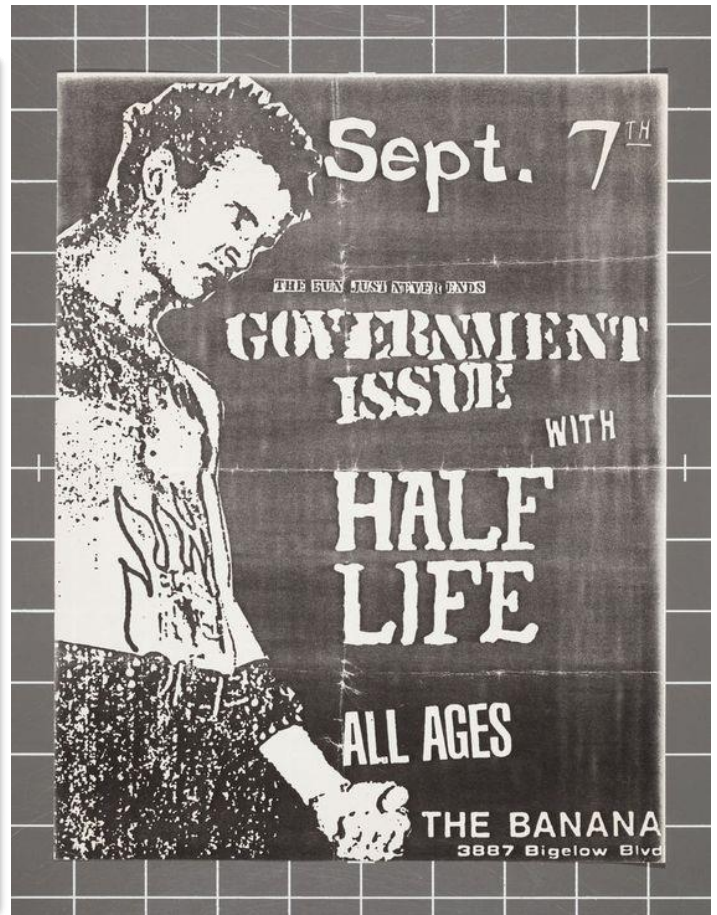
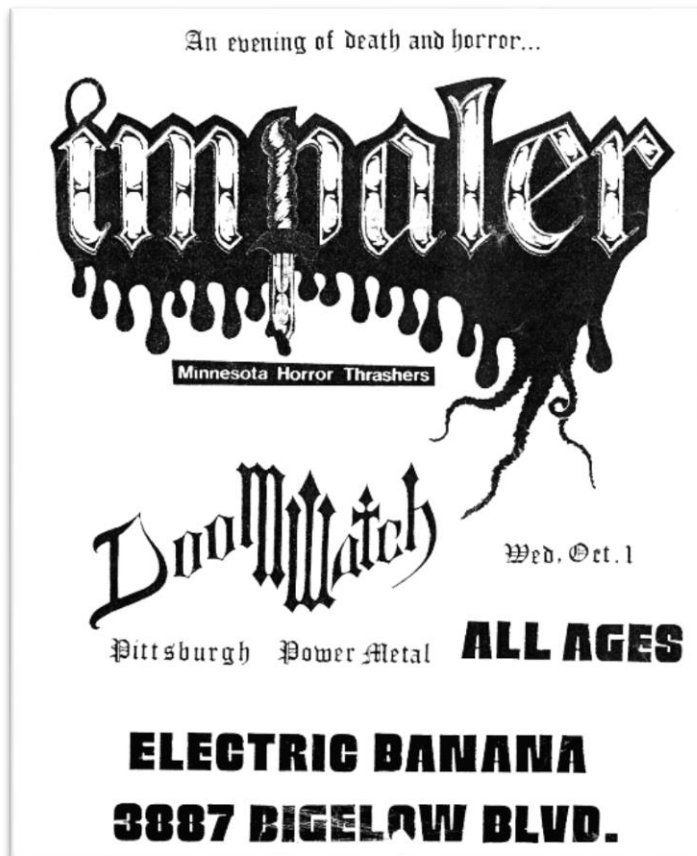
## Appendix 2



This Google Map image of “Music Venues Near Carnegie Mellon” demonstrates the lack of venues in Oakland. To note, Carnegie Music Hall traditionally hosts classical performances. Kresge Theatre and Alumni Concert Hall are on-campus spaces for Carnegie Mellon School of Music students. Note the contrast to the map in Appendix 1 with the number of venues.



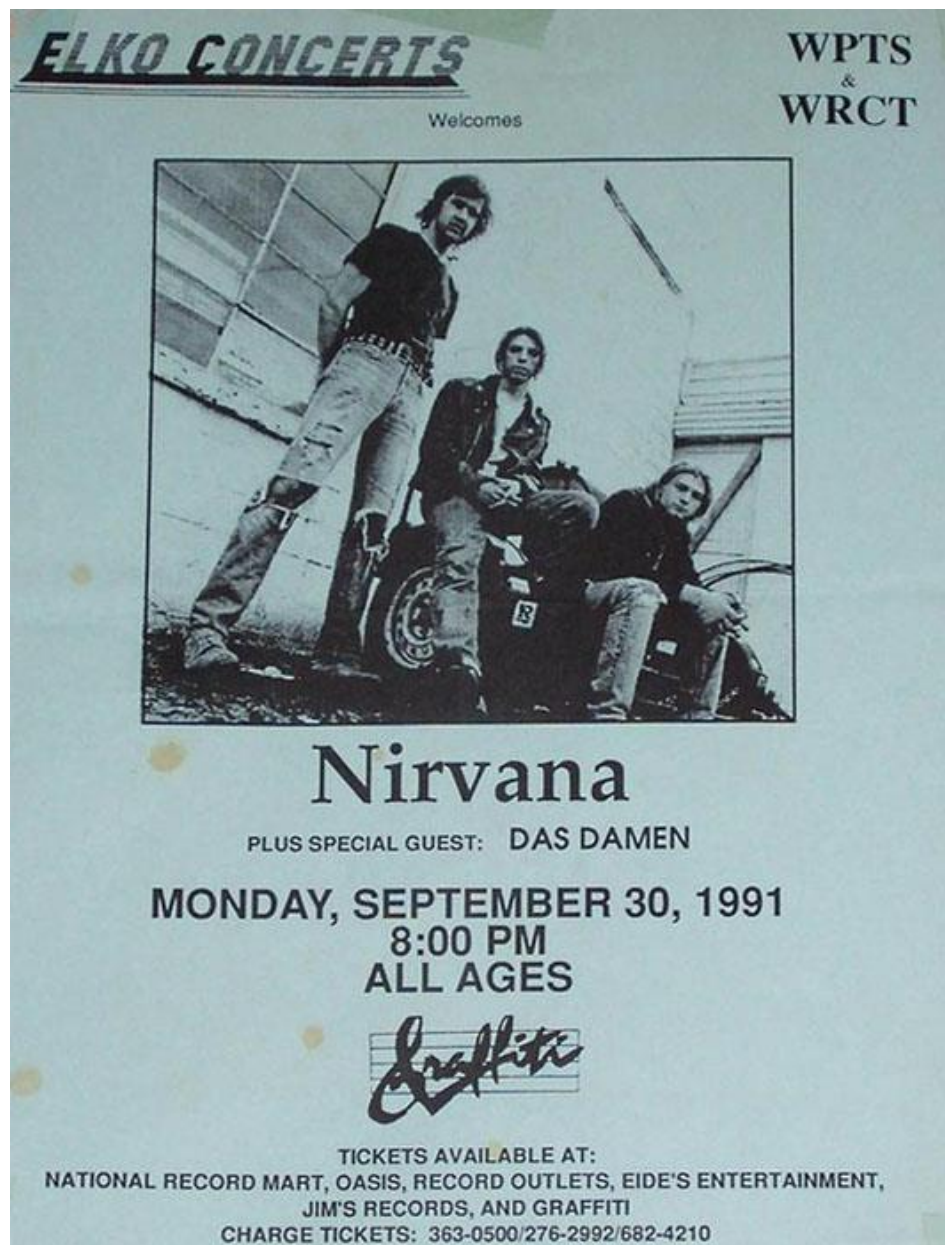
## Appendix 3



“1986.” Electric Banana Pittsburgh. <http://www.electricbananacub.net/p/1986.html>

These images show posters for shows held at The Electric Banana in 1986. Note the bands being described as “Power Metal” and the general heavy alternative aesthetic that defined The Electric Banana.

## Appendix 4



“Nirvana Show Poster”. 91.3 WYEP.

<http://musicblog.wyep.org/2013/02/20/memories-of-nirvanas-only-pittsburgh-show/>

This image shows Nirvana playing at the Graffiti venue just six days before the release of their seminal album, “Nevermind”. Nirvana already had a following in the alternative music scene with their prior releases. Also, it shows the partnering of other local music organizations such as WPTS and WRCT, the two college radio stations. As a result, Appendix 3 shows not only were students attending concerts, but also helped put them on in Oakland.

## Appendix 5



“Black Flag.” Electric Banana Pittsburgh. <http://www.electricbananaclub.net/p/black-flag.html>

This image shows a 4<sup>th</sup> of July celebration at The Electric Banana featuring several bands, with the most prominent being the legendary punk band Black Flag. The show supposedly has significance in the band’s history as being the last show featuring Dez Cadena on vocals before Henry Rollins took over as the lead singer.



Appendix 6



Beale, John. "View of the demolition from above". *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*.  
<http://newsinteractive.post-gazette.com/thedigs/2014/10/20/life-and-death-of-the-syria-mosque/#jp-carousel-153>

Appendix 5 shows the scene of the Syria Mosque demolition by UPMC and one of the many benefit concert that were put on to rescue the Mosque.

## Appendix 7

[redacted] shared Heavywaits's event.

This is on Saturday in Bloomfield! Benefit show for The National Immigration Law Center. 30% of the clothing sales at the store goes to the organization. So come get some new clothes and hear great local artists for a good cause. Featuring local artists such as String Machine, Rchrd Prkr, Ragweed&Rye, •fig• (Elizabeth), and Tim Vitullo.



Looking for bands for gigs coming up at The Venus Flytrap/CG:  
Punk bands for a show on April 9th  
Punk/metal/hardcore bands for two shows on both/either April 25th and May 29th  
Would especially love to get more femme/nb artists on the bill!!!  
Please hit me up asap for more details!!

Like Comment

2



Write a comment...



[redacted] shared [redacted] event.

This is happening on Saturday with two awesome touring bands + Short Fictions + The Bird Hour and a Sluggs solo set, don't miss it!



**RFA / The Vernes / Short Fictions / The...**  
Sat 8 PM · Dogfunk  
Kayla and Emma

★ Interested

[redacted] shared denzell's event.  
1:26pm

GIG! TONIGHT! OAKLAND!



**Lance Bangs/The Otis Wolves/Denzell**  
Fri 7 PM · The Maxi Pad  
Jake, Connor and 4 friends

★ Interested

Like Comment

You, Jackson Pollock Boytim and 1 other



Write a comment...



“DIY Postings.” Anonymous authors. Accessed April 13, 2017. Posted April 13, 2017.

These screenshots show standard use of social media by DIY members. Note the use of Facebook to promote events and recruit acts. Names of specific individuals have been redacted to protect confidentiality.



## Appendix 8

**DIY VENUE HARM REDUCTION**PERMALINK: <http://bit.ly/SaferDIY>

Doc temporarily closed for public comment as we edit for clarity &amp; review for accuracy.

DIY VENUE HARM REDUCTION is an incomplete, evolving draft of suggestions for fast, free and low-cost changes that can be implemented immediately. It is NOT a comprehensive safety manual or replacement for involving licensed experts and meeting fire / building codes. It was initiated by [S. Surface](#), a curator, unlicensed architectural designer and long-term DIY music community member currently based in Seattle, WA, and is a group effort being edited by community and professional experts who span a range from DIY/lived experience to credentialed professionals.

For the original shortlist of tips that kicked off this document, view [The Stranger](#).

To offer or request help for a specific venue, use <http://safervenues.com>, a resource initiated by [Melissa J. Frost](#).

**IMMEDIATE LOW-COST & FREE BUILDING & SAFETY MODIFICATIONS**

- **De-clutter** your space and surrounding areas. Piles = fires and obstruction.
- **Prioritize disability justice in all updates and maintenance of your space.** For every decision you make, consider how people with disabilities, elders, children, intoxicated people, and others with challenges will navigate the space. Everyone must be able to get out, so make decisions that support the most vulnerable inhabitants. As you make improvements, when possible, hire/pay disabled people to accessibility-audit your venue.
- **Clear obstructions to doorways.** To ensure people can safely enter or exit a doorway, remove any objects or clutter that may prevent the door from opening fully. This should especially be checked during events when equipment may be temporarily placed in front of a door.
- **ACCESSIBILITY RAMPS - INFO TBD.** Unless, your building is already mobility accessible via pre-installed ramps or easements, aftermarket ramps can be purchased and installed to ensure all emergency exits are also accessible to wheelchairs. (for some options see [Amazon](#)).
- **Prevent the public from entering off-limits areas** by using signs, tape, and/or barricades, so these are not mistaken as exit paths or accessible space.
- **Do not allow large installations or dividers of fabric, paper, flammable wood, etc.** unless the materials are known to be flame retardant and/or the space has working sprinklers. [ "Require all existing large installations or dividers made of flammable material to be fireproofed. There are cheap, low-cost methods as well as standard products, and they vary for different flammable materials that can be found by searching online." ]
- **Clear paths to exits.** Mark and label building circulation with reflective tape or paint on the floor. Ideally, these glow in the dark, paths should be at least 44" (1.2m) wide, with doors a minimum 36" (90cm) wide. Whenever possible, design your navigation so it's possible to get through the space while using a wheelchair.
- **Clearly mark all exit doors.** Use g reflective, or battery-powered LED-lit signage (approx. \$35).
- **Label the circuits on your breaker box.** This makes it easy to kill the power to something without the lights going out.
- **Figure out which outlets are on which circuits, and what the maximum current is for every circuit. Make sure you're not overloading a circuit.** (this should probably be worded better)
- **Install battery operated exit signs with integral strobes** as not all visitors can hear a fire alarm. This will also help with the location of exits in instances of crowd panic.
- **Clearly mark all emergency exits**, including non-barred windows, fire escapes, etc.
- **Obtain escape ladders** for upper-story rooms and make sure they are easily usable in emergencies. ([Kidde KL-2S Two-Story Fire Escape Ladder](#) is approximately \$35. Make sure to test on windows. Train key people on use.)
- **Obtain at least one carrying chair per set of stairwells in your location and per floor.** The chair should be stored in a clearly marked and unobstructed place. Key residents/volunteers should be trained on how to appropriately use it in times of emergencies. The cheapest these chairs run are \$154 (soft carriers requiring 4 people to carry one person can be purchased [here](#); hard carriers that allow one-person to carry one other person can be purchased [here](#)). Used ones may also be found for much cheaper from closing hospitals, schools, and government buildings.
- **Ensure all major exit path infrastructure is made of fire-safe material.** This includes hallways, doors, stairs

“DIY Harm Venue Reduction.” Unknown author.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/1XtBIjVjf3kiyCtLZcFcEBR2dv-KIPBCYIA-IZurDZLg/edit>

This image shows page two of 20 of the online, “DIY VENUE HARM REDUCTION.” Documents like these are part of larger efforts by the DIY community to ensure safety following concerns due to the Ghost Ship Fire in Oakland, CA.



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