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**Cultural Mapping in Baltimore:
The Creation of *GEOLOOM co>map***

Community Scope

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Cultural Mapping in Baltimore: The Creation of *GEOLOOM co>map*

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“The contributions that artists, arts organizations, and community cultural practices make to the life of a city are our glue. They help us celebrate who we are and our traditions. They encourage us to understand other cultures and traditions. They bring us new ideas, expose social ills, and provide creative means to protest injustice. They delight, challenge, and provoke us. They liberate emotions we didn’t know we had. They are, perhaps, the single most important ingredient in that amorphous thing/place/identity that we call community.”

— Ann Markusen, Professor Emerita and Director Arts Economy Initiative and Project on Regional and Industrial Economics, Humphrey School of Public Affairs, University of Minnesota¹

What is *GEOLOOM Co>Map*?

GEOLOOM co>map is an online mapping tool that visualizes how arts and culture are woven into Baltimore’s neighborhoods and social fabric. Launched to the public in July 2017, the goal of *GEOLOOM co>map* is to insure that every Baltimore community has access to reliable and actionable data that can be used to inform decisions about creating and maintaining assets that contribute to social well-being and community vitality. The tool is intended for a wide audience, including arts and culture organizations, urban planners, businesses, non-profits, researchers, community associations, activists, real estate developers and residents.

With that broad audience in mind, the name “*GEOLOOM co>map*” was purposefully selected without direct reference to “art” in its title so that members outside of Baltimore’s traditional arts and culture sphere would use the map. *GEOLOOM*, with allusions to Baltimore’s textile history, emphasizes the tools used

in weaving together the city's cultural, social and built environment fabrics. The "co" in the name *GEOLOOM co>map* stands for community, collaboration and cohesion as well as the co-creation of data with users.

The main objectives for establishing an interactive, web-based and publicly accessible mapping tool for displaying arts and cultural data include the following:

- Visualize the presence and potential gaps of neighborhood cultural resources to foster more equitable distribution of resources over time;
- Demonstrate the citywide impact of the arts and creative placemaking;
- Enable residents, organizations and other stakeholders to contribute data and information on self-defined cultural resources over time; and
- Increase awareness of more inclusive concepts of neighborhood arts and culture among cultural institutions, businesses and elected officials.

Inputs into *GEOLOOM co>map* consist of data from a number of agencies and organizations collected over the past several years by the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance—Jacob France Institute (BNA-JFI) at the University of Baltimore. The collected data provides information on cultural resources ranging from murals to community gardens to historic events. The map visualizes the integration of these disparate data sources with a focus on developing a long term, up-to-date and sustainable dataset. In addition to data obtained from organizations, crowdsourced information from users themselves allows the data in *GEOLOOM co>map* to continuously expand and evolve to paint a clearer picture of the unique character of Baltimore's neighborhoods.

The process leading up to the creation of the *GEOLOOM co>map* involved a diverse set of organizations, stakeholders and community members. This issue of *Community Scope* details the steps taken to produce the tool as well as background, motivation and context for creating a mapping tool to capture culture in Baltimore's communities.

Arts and Culture are Integral to Neighborhoods

In 2010, Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa wrote *Creative Placemaking*, a white paper commissioned for The Mayors' Institute on City Design and published by the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which defined "creative placemaking" as the following:

*"In creative placemaking, partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities. Creative placemaking animates public and private spaces, rejuvenates structures and streetscapes, improves local business viability and public safety, and brings diverse people together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired."*²

Creative placemaking refers to arts and culture not as a pre-defined, standalone realm, but rather as a continuously evolving presence that is integral to all parts of a community and neighborhood.³ While the concept of creative placemaking has become an important means of understanding contemporary community-building, quantifying its scope and presence has been elusive. *GEOLOOM co>map* has been designed and conceived, therefore, to incorporate a broad array of arts and culture data that will expand over time. The online tool also includes underlying community-based indicators from Baltimore's *Vital Signs* report which provide neighborhood contextual information on housing, demographics, health, crime and safety, education, sustainability, and workforce and economic development. This integration of data sources will allow local cultural institutions to customize their activities for the surrounding environment and, in many ways, meet neighborhoods "where they are."

The Baltimore Context

A city of more than 620,000 residents, Baltimore is home to renowned and historic institutions that are public spaces for residents to engage in cultural life, including Lexington Market (est. 1782), Patterson Park (est. 1827), the Baltimore Symphony Orchestra (est. 1916) and the 21 neighborhood branches of the Enoch Pratt Free Library (est. 1886), one of the oldest free library systems in the United States. Filled with museums, monuments, galleries, parks and other historic sites, Baltimore has three Arts & Entertainment Districts and is considered to have the largest National Heritage Area in the country.

One of Baltimore's most distinctive features is its many different neighborhoods; one of its greatest weaknesses is its divisions and inequalities across race, income and geography. According to the 2011–2015 American Community Survey, 23.7 percent of Baltimoreans live below the poverty level compared to the national average of 15.5 percent, and many of the city's neighborhoods remain segregated along racial lines. Additionally, while certain neighborhoods continue to develop in Baltimore, there are approximately 16,000 vacant houses and numerous abandoned industrial sites that could be transformed into community space.⁴

The need to inclusively gather information about both formal and informal arts and culture across racial, economic, social and geographic lines has become increasingly apparent. Arts and culture is a medium for communicating across dividing lines. Gallery space, in museums or coffee shops, can show support for local artists from a diversity of neighborhoods; the presence of a mural or a monument can make a political statement or center identity in a neighborhood; and neighborhood block parties and citywide festivals are open spaces that engage all members of a community.

Ideation & Forming Partnerships

In early 2014, with funding from the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation and support of the Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance, Alyce Myatt, former director of Media Arts for the NEA, was hired to conduct a scan of how creative placemaking could benefit every Baltimore neighborhood. After meeting and speaking with a number of key stakeholders in the Baltimore arts community, as well as national leaders in the area of cultural planning, a recurring theme emerged — the critical need to aggregate data in service of identifying and then promoting the health of artists, arts organizations, and, ultimately, communities as a whole.

Several organizations in Baltimore were individually interviewed to determine their interest and the resources they were able to bring to the project. Those resources included existing datasets, financial support and the ability to assist in making introductions to key individuals in the civic, arts, funding and community sectors. The organizations included the following:

- **Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts (BOPA)**, the city's local arts council that oversees vast number of arts-related activities, including grant making, the commissioning of artists for neighborhood arts programs and the awarding of art prizes;
- **Robert W. Deutsch Foundation (RWDF)**, a Baltimore-based private philanthropy supporting innovation in science and technology, arts and culture, media, education and social justice;
- **Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance (GBCA)**, the largest arts and culture membership organization in Baltimore, which counts over 400 individual artists and organizations among its members; and

- **Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance—Jacob France Institute (BNIA-JFI)**, a self-supported research unit at the University of Baltimore whose core mission is to provide open access to meaningful, reliable and actionable data about, and for, Baltimore and its neighborhoods.

During the scan process, it became clear that BNIA-JFI could have an important role to play in understanding the impact of creative placemaking in Baltimore's neighborhoods. As a data intermediary for Baltimore, BNIA-JFI acquires data from city and state government agencies as well as other sources and disseminates community level information to citywide organizations, neighborhoods, foundations, businesses and universities to support and strengthen the practice of well informed decision-making.

Since 2002, BNIA-JFI has been issuing Baltimore's *Vital Signs* report, which helps community members, decision-makers and funders measure progress towards meaningful, positive outcomes at the community level as well as measure community needs in specific and actionable ways. During the 2012 strategic planning process, BNIA-JFI created a key objective to increase the availability of arts and cultural indicators in future *Vital Signs* reports.⁵

An important initial step for the project was understanding from where "data" might come. Baltimore lacks a department of arts and culture, so this presented an opportunity for direct involvement by a variety of organizations and community groups. Through a newly formed fellowship program called the Baltimore Corps,⁶ an Arts & Culture Fellow was hired to bridge BNIA-JFI's relationships with arts and cultural organizations and begin the process of expanding arts and culture data available to the public.

While local and national funders have an undeniable presence in Baltimore, the lack of coordination across groups has resulted in gaps of support for arts and culture. A main goal of the mapping project was to create a tool that would allow funders, artists and arts organizations to identify neighborhoods where there was an absence of arts services and resources while at the same time creating awareness of the use of the arts as a community-based vehicle of social and economic development.

Fundraising for the creation of what would later become known as *GEOLOOM co>map* brought in support and partnership from a combination of local and national funders: Baltimore Community Foundation, Baltimore Development Foundation, Robert W. Deutsch Foundation, France-Merrick Foundation and the NEA.

Baltimore Data Day 2015



On July 9, 2015, the Federal Reserve Bank of Richmond in partnership with BNIA-JFI held the *Baltimore Data Day 2015 Pre-Session on Creative Placemaking* at the Richmond Fed's Baltimore branch. This was the third time that the Richmond

Fed had teamed up with BNIA-JFI to host the kick-off event for Data Day, an annual event that takes place the following day on the University of Baltimore campus. The 2015 pre-session focused on the investment in arts and cultural activities to drive community revitalization and rebuild local economies. One of the most promising strategies for reviving older communities is leveraging the arts as an economic engine. The Richmond Fed continually looks at new ways to maximize a community's assets as well as measure their impact. The event brought together national and local leaders in the creative placemaking field to discuss how arts and culture data may be used as a catalyst for economic and social change.

Jason Schupbach, director of Design Programs for the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), opened the pre-session with a national perspective on creative placemaking. Starting from the basis of meeting people where they live, Schupbach discussed how a Knight Foundation national report asked the question, why do you love where you live? The top three reasons centered on social offerings, openness and aesthetics.⁷ Given this finding, Schupbach argued for the need to utilize arts in conjunction with other approaches to create a thriving community. He stated that, as a strategy, creative placemaking involves strengthening economic development, fostering civic engagement, building resiliency and contributing to quality of life; in other words, investment in the arts has the potential to give a community agency. Schupbach highlighted NEA's "Our Town" creative placemaking grants program whose investments "contribute to the livability of communities and place the arts at their core."⁸ At the time, there were 365 grants in the field nationwide going to nonprofits, local businesses, government, education, foundations and Business Improvement Districts (BIDs). Schupbach presented a number of specific examples from across the U.S., including Baltimore's Revitalizing Station North grant. The NEA has put together an "Exploring Our Town" online resource of case studies,⁹ which describe the place, community, local needs, vision, partnerships,

logistics, and anticipated and unexpected impact from each project.

The next series of speakers at the pre-session discussed arts and culture data efforts in the city of Philadelphia. Dr. Mark J. Stern, Kenneth L. M. Pray Professor of Social Policy and History and co-director of the Urban Studies Program at the University of Pennsylvania, presented work on the Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP), which, in collaboration with the Reinvestment Fund, has developed to create a multidimensional index of social well-being that takes into account cultural resources in Philadelphia's neighborhoods. The incorporation of cultural resources into the index allows for an assessment of whether "cultural infrastructure contributes to other aspects of social well-being and community vitality."¹⁰ Lindsay Tucker So, research and policy associate for the City of Philadelphia Office of Arts, Culture and the Creative Economy (OACCE), demonstrated *CultureBlocks*¹¹, Philadelphia's free online mapping tool that visualizes the city's cultural assets and activity alongside local geographic, social, economic and demographic data. The tool, which is hosted on the *PolicyMap* platform, allows the user to explore 50 datasets ranging from the arts to demographics to municipal data. The purpose of the tool is to support arts community empowerment and new opportunity generation.

The final speaker, Ira Goldstein, president of Policy Solutions at the Reinvestment Fund, shared his perspective based on how investment in the arts is a critical tool in the effort to revitalize communities and engage residents. He has learned through his organization's work in Philadelphia and Baltimore that data, community organizing and investment are tools that can help spur positive change in communities. However, Goldstein noted that while community organizing is an essential part of that mix, it is difficult to fund. He argued that occupancy drives reinvestment, so a community should build from its nodes of strength, which include anchor institutions, community-based organizations (CBOs) and physical infrastructure, and that the arts can be counted as one of these nodes.

The day ended with a forward-looking panel discussion about how Baltimore might map out the city's cultural assets and activity by implementing a data tool similar to Philadelphia's *CultureBlocks*. Following this discussion, as detailed in this *Community Scope*, Baltimore's *GEOLOOM co>map* platform was developed.

Involving Future Users in the Creation of GEOLOOM

The *GEOLOOM co>map* Working Group (Working Group) was formed to ensure that a diversity of stakeholders were involved in the design and development phase of the tool, as well as the collection of data. The purpose of the Working Group was to guide the creative process so that *GEOLOOM* would be helpful to many different organizations and communities, including:

- **Foundations and Businesses**, (represented by) Baltimore Community Foundation, Baltimore Development Corporation, Baltimore Integration Partnership, BBVA Compass, France Merrick Foundation, and the Robert W. Deutsch Foundation.
- **Arts and Culture Organizations and Groups**, (represented by) Arts Education in Maryland Schools Alliance, Arts Every Day, Baltimore National Heritage Area, Baltimore Office of Promotion & the Arts, Citizen Artist, CityLit, Enoch Pratt Free Library, Greater Baltimore Cultural Alliance, Mary-

land Citizens for the Arts, Maryland Humanities Council, Maryland Institute College of Art, Maryland State Arts Council, and Poetry in Community.

- **Community and Neighborhood Organizations**, including Arts & Entertainment Districts, such as Belair-Edison Neighborhoods, Inc., Bromo Arts and Entertainment District, Healthy Neighborhoods, Highlandtown Arts District, Innovation Village and Mount Royal CDC, and Station North Arts & Entertainment, Inc.

BNIA-JFI received input from the Working Group for the following questions (see Figures 1 and 2):

- How do you define arts and culture?
- How does arts and culture foster vitality in your neighborhood?
- What types of data would help your organization or neighborhood in decision-making?
- What types of data would help identify neighborhood needs?

Figure 1. Word Cloud of Feedback from Working Group



Figure 2. Example Feedback from Working Group

How do you define "arts and culture"?

Mentimeter



Data Collection

The intent of *GEOLOOM co>map* is to portray an expansive, inclusive and community-defined notion of arts and culture. As a result, data for *GEOLOOM co>map* is collected from a number of non-traditional sources and integrated into a combined database by BNIA-JFI. Initial data for inclusion are comprised of library card memberships (Enoch Pratt Free Library), public art (BOPA) and event permits (Baltimore City Department of Transportation). *GEOLOOM co>map* is designed to be able to expand to house the number of additional datasets, including arts organization and school partnerships (Arts Every Day), historic investment grants (Baltimore National Heritage Area) and a growing list of arts and culture organizations from a variety of sources (DataArts, BOPA, GBCA).¹²

Relationship-building was central to data collection and to representing a larger picture of what was occurring in Baltimore neighborhoods. This included:

- **Working with government agencies:** what types of records they kept that would indicate vitality in neighborhoods, such as gathering event permits from the Baltimore City Department of Transportation to see what events occurred in the public right-of-ways;
- **Lists from arts and culture organizations:** existing records from organizations, such as BOPA and GBCA, could be translated into data points by uniformly geocoding multiple lists of arts and culture organizations throughout the city to place on the map;

- **Investments from funder organizations:** grants and other resources from funders could also be mapped, such as inventories of grantees from the Baltimore National Heritage Area, an organization interested in broadening the distribution of their funds, to demonstrate their support in different communities; and
- **Touring neighborhoods:** working with artists and community organizers more familiar with community art and artists that are often missing from public inventories.

Designing and Developing the Platform

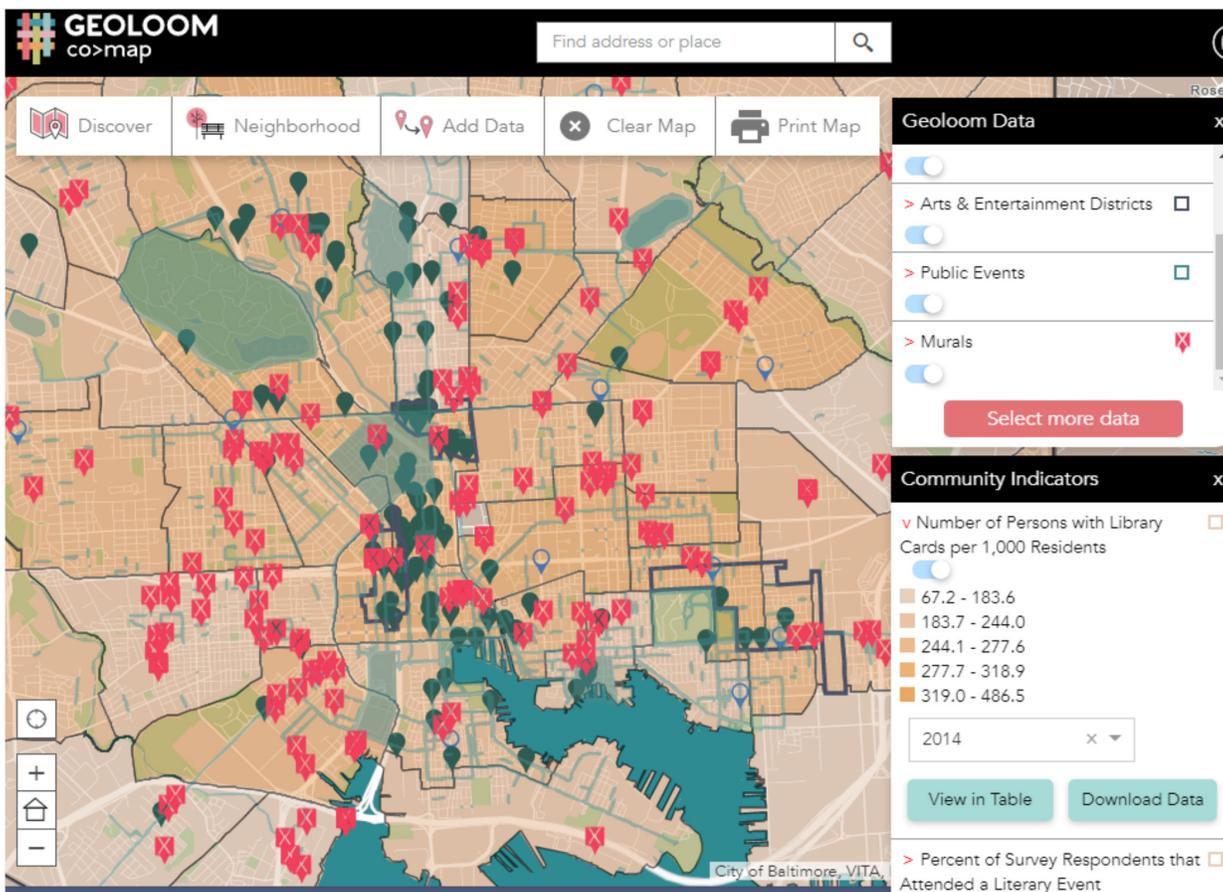
Given that the map would need to appeal to most artists and creative users in Baltimore, special attention was paid to the design of the website prior to beginning the development itself. Professor T.J. O'Donnell in the University of Baltimore's School of Communications Design was brought on board as the project's designer. Blue Raster, a Washington, D.C.-based firm, was hired as the web developer to bring the designs to fruition. The Working Group was heavily involved in identifying features of the interface and design to ensure that the map was accessible to a wide audience. Through a process of feedback from partners and the Working Group, the website's final design provided clear direction for ways to use the website and access multiple forms of data.

During April 2017, beta testing groups were convened to collect external feedback on the usability of the

website as well as suggestions for other sources of data and ways to reach a broader audience. After making changes based on the beta testers' suggestions, a second round of focus groups was conducted online in June 2017.

In addition to improving the beta version of the platform, the focus groups served to inform an audience of funders, urban planners, community members, arts and culture organizations, artists and researchers about the website. The connections to these groups helped create awareness about the ways the platform could inform individuals and organizations about how they are distributing resources, what types of arts and culture are in different neighborhoods, and what types of community assets were available and accessible to those directly involved in arts and culture.

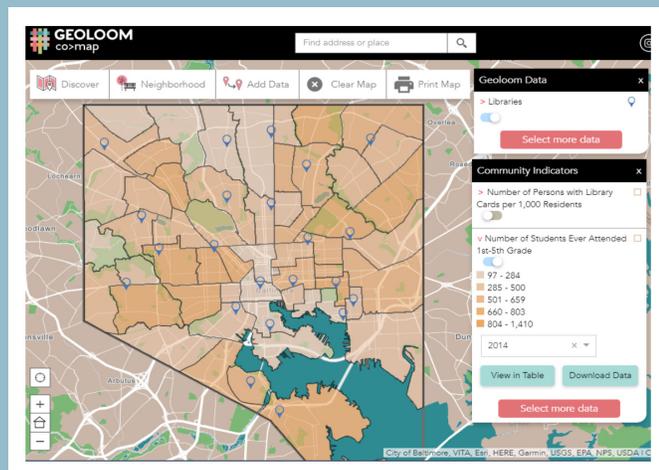
For many organizations that provided data for beta testing, such as BOPA and the Baltimore National Heritage Area, spatially visualizing their work and funding for arts and culture throughout Baltimore has allowed them to see the diversity of grants administered in neighborhoods. Representatives from the T. Rowe Price Foundation who attended a beta tester group noted that the map would be helpful identifying and addressing funding gaps. When looking at the initial data displayed on *GEOLOOM co>map*, many individuals and groups not only learned more about arts and culture in the city and its neighborhoods, but also learned how data can support decision-making about existing or potential resources in communities.



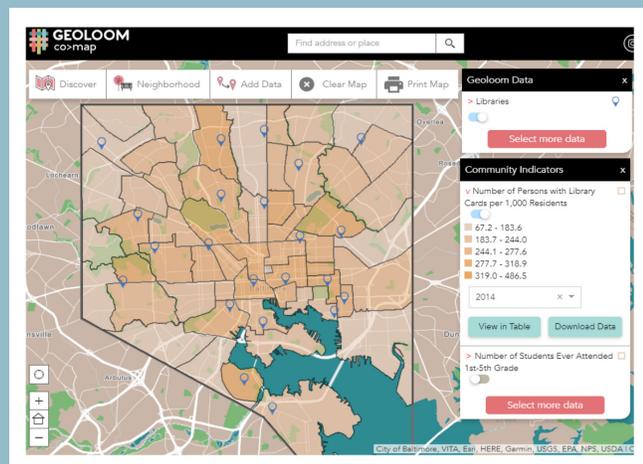
Beta User Pop-Out Story

Pearl Clark, the secretary of Neighborhoods United in Northwest Baltimore, has spent the last few years trying to make an argument for a local Enoch Pratt Free Library Branch in Park Heights. When she attended the beta testing for the *GEOLOOM co>map* in May 2017, she was able to use the mapping platform to demonstrate the need for and viability of a library in the Park Heights neighborhood. She used the map to show that the “Number of Students Ever Attended 1st–5th Grade” in Park Heights was one of the highest in the city (890 students). She then could see that Cherry Hill and Belair-Edison had similarly high numbers of elementary school students, but unlike Park Heights, they both have library branches accessibly located in their neighborhood boundaries. Not surprisingly, Cherry Hill and Belair-Edison have two of the highest “Number of Persons with Library Cards per 1,000 Residents,” unlike Park Heights, which has a relatively small share of residents with library cards.

Map 1. Number of Students Ever Attended 1st–5th Grade by Baltimore Neighborhood



Map 2. Number of Persons with Library Cards per 1,000 Residents by Baltimore Neighborhood



By using *GEOLOOM co>map* to demonstrate that there is a gap in access to a library in Park Heights, paired with the level of library membership in neighborhoods with similar numbers of elementary school-aged children, Clark was able to use data to make the argument for why a library was both needed and could be viable in Park Heights.

The Last Link: Cultural Participation in Neighborhoods

The presence of formal or publicly supported arts and cultural resources in a neighborhood may or may not relate to actual participation by the neighborhood residents. To truly be a resource to communities, non-professional, cultural opportunity interactions need to be representative of the variations in neighborhoods themselves. So, in addition to the data collected for *GEOLOOM co>map* from organizations, BNIA-JFI conducted an online survey to help answer a question for all of Baltimore's neighborhoods: What do people do in different neighborhoods — based on their own conceptualization of culture?

During spring 2017, in partnership with several community-based organizations, a short survey capturing cultural participation by neighborhood was administered with the goal of having a wide range of Baltimoreans identify the types of activities they enjoy. The survey captured arts and culture participation patterns in the city as well as enabled individuals to self-define culture. The promotion occurred in Baltimore for a 6-week period from mid-February to late-March 2017.

The survey results, which are available on *GEOLOOM co>map* as well as in the *Cultural Participation in Baltimore* report, show, for example, where there are theaters in the city and the reported percentage of residents in the neighborhood who attend a movie theater. Overall, more than 60 percent of respondents reported that in the previous three months they participated in a live performance, movie at a theater and/or an exhibit, gallery or other display of arts or culture.¹³ (See Figure 3)

Of the 11.1 percent of responses for activities not in the prescribed list of activities, the open ended descriptions are grouped into categories and topics,

such as attending a curated talk or participating in a civic meeting or protest (See Figure 4). These categories can be included for consideration into subsequent survey updates.

The distribution of participation responses by the respondents' demographic and socioeconomic status revealed very few within-group differences by category, which implies that a diverse set of Baltimoreans participate in various cultural opportunities. Among the statistically significant¹⁴ differences that did exist, some of the following generalizations can be made:

Respondents with higher education levels and higher income attended live performances and movies in a theater.

- Respondents with higher education levels visited an exhibit/gallery or a historical site.
- More male and white respondents visited historical sites; more male respondents attended sporting events.
- More female respondents took or taught an arts related class.
- Younger respondents created arts outside their home or attended a festival or block party.
- More Hispanic respondents reported attending a festival or block party.
- Lower-income and Black/African-American respondents were more likely to participate in a literary/spoken word event.

The preliminary implications of these findings may help corroborate the kinds of attendees that currently participate in cultural opportunities throughout Baltimore and should help inform a broader definition of supporting arts and cultural resources in the city.

Hi Neighbor!

do you have 3 minutes?

Please take an anonymous survey about art and culture in Baltimore.



www.Geloom.org/survey

Thank you!



Figure 3. Responses to Participation Activities in the Previous 3 Months

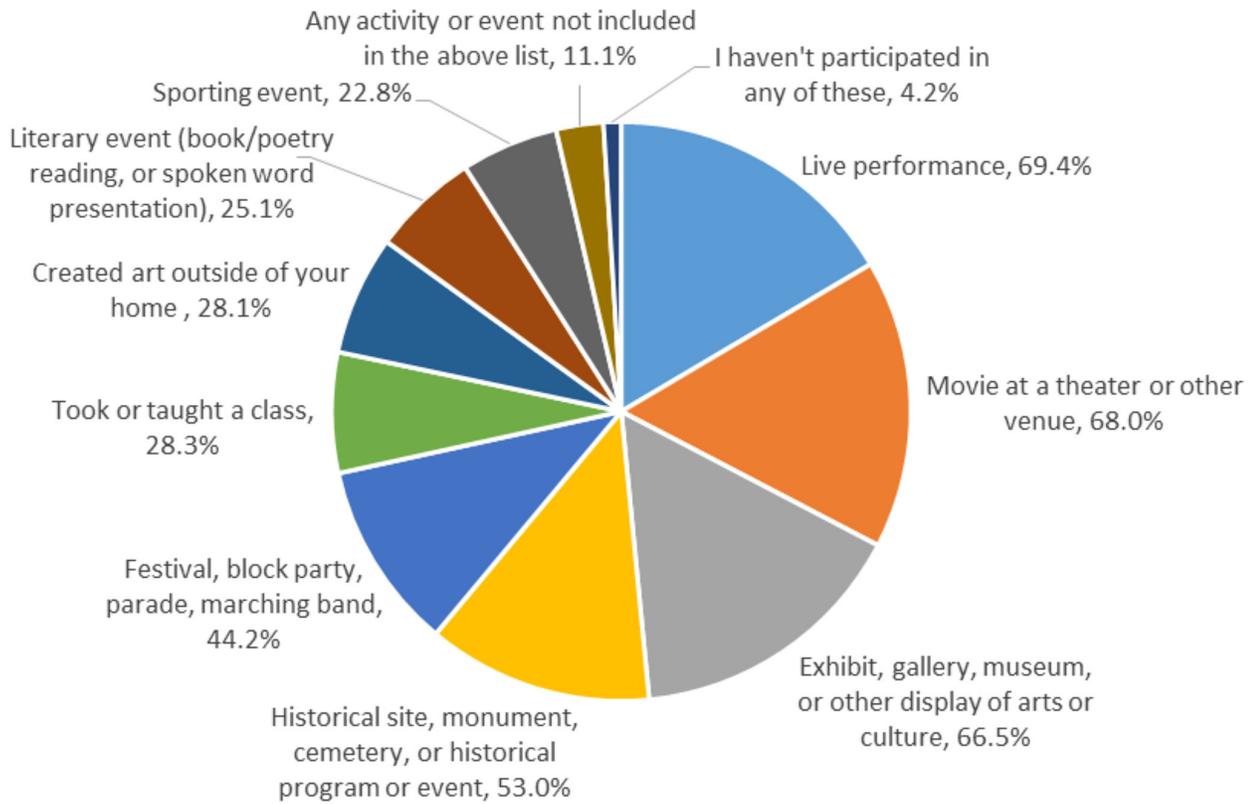


Figure 4. Types of Responses from Open-Ended Participation Option



Handbook for Cultural Mapping

While the *GEOLOOM co>map* is specifically tailored to Baltimore, the idea of cultural mapping is relevant to a variety of places. All communities have both formal and informal arts and culture activities that could be collected to help with community investment decision-making processes. In order to share our process of community-defined cultural mapping with other localities, we created a Cultural Mapping Handbook¹⁵ to help other places embark on a similar project. The Handbook documents the process and methodologies we used to create the *GEOLOOM co>map*, with the purpose of explaining how the tool is used as well as creating a development guide for other cities, towns and regions that may want to create a similar tool. The Handbook details the *GEOLOOM co>map*'s origins, data collection methodologies and sources, staffing needs, budget and the incorporation of a diversity of stakeholders in the creation of the tool.

About the Authors

Christine Hwang is a Research Assistant at Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance—Jacob France Institute (BNIA-JFI) at the University of Baltimore. She is responsible for expanding BNIA's inventory of arts and culture indicators.

Dr. Seema D. Iyer is the Associate Director and Research Assistant Professor for the Jacob France Institute in the University of Baltimore's Merrick School of Business and has overseen the Baltimore Neighborhood Indicators Alliance since 2011.

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Resources

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ENDNOTES

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- 14 The differences are based on Pearson Chi-Square statistic of less than 0.01, so they are statistically significant at the 99 percent level. For additional details see Appendix C of the Cultural Participation Report: <https://bniajfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/Cultural-Participation-Survey-Results-2017.pdf>.
- 15 The Cultural Mapping Handbook is available online at <http://bniajfi.org/wp-content/uploads/2017/07/GELOOM-Handbook-FINAL.pdf>.



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