

Working together to build a more inclusive future for Charlotte



From Charles Thomas, Knight Foundation <web@knightfoundation.org>

To Sarah <sjohnston@tuesdayforumcharlotte.org>

Date 2020-12-18 13:44

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COMMUNITIES

Dear Sarah,

2020 has been challenging for all of us, but we have also learned invaluable lessons. One such lesson is that when we work together as a community, we can overcome the most difficult obstacles. I'm proud to say that we've seen much of this spirit in Charlotte.

Knight Foundation has continued to provide support for community initiatives in Charlotte to transform the Historic West End into an inclusive and thriving residential and commercial corridor. Most importantly, Knight's commitments seek to ensure that West End residents are participating in the corridor's growth through programming that encourages community interaction and connections.

Here's some other areas we've supported:

COVID-19 Response Fund

When the pandemic struck, Knight pledged \$500,000 to provide immediate relief in Charlotte through the [COVID-19 Response Fund](#). In partnership with Mecklenburg County and the City of Charlotte, the fund allocated resources to local organizations that provided aid to those impacted by the pandemic.

Center City Small Business Innovation Fund

The pandemic delivered a crushing blow to many businesses, especially small ones. Knight pledged \$250,000 to the [Center City Small Business Innovation Fund](#), launched by Charlotte Center City Partners and Honeywell. Knight's investment funded grants of up to \$40,000 to help Historic West End small businesses of 50 or fewer employees innovate and adapt to the economic challenges of COVID19. The support allowed these small businesses to invest in supplies, training, design, technology, infrastructure and internal operations as they face new economic challenges.

Supporting Digital Inclusion: Civic Tech Engagement Hub

In 2017, Knight announced over \$1 million in support for the [Project LIFT - Civic and Tech Engagement Hub](#), an initiative providing programs for West Charlotte residents designed to help students and families build digital skills and gain access to technology. This year, we reallocated \$350,000 of this grant to support digital inclusion for 1,600 West Side students, ensuring that elementary, middle and high schools in the Central One Learning District have access to laptops, hot spots and digital literacy training in order to attend virtual school amid the pandemic.

Learn more about Charlotte's digital divide in education [here](#).

Charlotte's Emerging City Champions

In August, Knight and 880 Cities announced the 20 winners of the 2020 Emerging City Champions fellowship. The open call sought young leaders with creative ideas to help build more equitable and inclusive post-pandemic communities. We were excited to announce the two winners from Charlotte — [Emily Condon](#) and [Makayla Binter](#).

Condon intends to help transform local underpasses into areas that celebrate community identity and culture in the Historic West End, and Binter will work with youth and local artists on a mural that showcases a timeline of the Historic West End. Learn more about their projects — as well as those of the entire Emerging City Champions cohort — [here](#).

Public Spaces Forum 2020

In October, Knight hosted the Knight Public Spaces Forum 2020. The event convened some of the country's leading thinkers for a series of conversations on public spaces and their important role in building equitable communities. I had the pleasure of moderating two breakout sessions during the forum. View

more [here](#).

Supporting the arts in Charlotte

In a time of restrictions and physical distancing, artists have been producing works and reaching new audiences through creative and resilient methods. This week, we announced \$2.1 million dollar investments we've made to help artists, arts organizations and cultural institutions in Charlotte innovate, increase diversity and expand their reach. Read more about the exciting projects [in this blog post](#) by Victoria Rogers, Knight's vice president for the arts.

In 2021, I'm excited to share more grant opportunities from Knight and ways to build a more equitable and inclusive Charlotte. If you have neighbors or colleagues interested in our work, please encourage them [to register to receive email updates](#) and follow us on social media.

Stay safe and happy holidays,

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