SMU'S NATIONAL CENTER FOR ARTS RESEARCH (NCAR) RELEASES THIRD ANNUAL LIST OF MOST ARTS-VIBRANT CITIES IN THE U.S.

2017 Arts Vibrancy Index Includes Eight New Cities
Cities Ranked by Supply, Demand, and Government Support for the Arts

Dallas (SMU), April 25, 2017 – SMU's National Center for Arts Research (NCAR) today released its third annual Arts Vibrancy Index, which ranks more than 900 communities across the country, examining the level of supply, demand, and government support for the arts in each city. This year, 20% of the communities on the most-vibrant list appear for the first time – a total of eight new communities, including one new state, Alaska. Key movements and new communities featured on the lists include:

- **Pittsburgh, PA; Richmond, VA; and Rochester, NY,** which were ranked in 2015 but not in 2016, all reclaimed spots on the top 20 large cities list;
- **Bremerton-Silverdale, WA; Ithaca, NY; Asheville, NC; and Barnstable Town, MA** are new to the index and are featured in the top 10 medium cities list;
- **Hudson, NY; Greenfield Town, MA; Oneonta, NY; and Juneau, AK,** also new to the index, are in the top 10 small cities list.

For the first time, community rankings are organized into three distinct lists based on size: large (population over 1 million), medium (population between 100,000 and 1 million), and small (population under 100,000 with an urban core of 10,000-50,000), a departure from the previous iterations of the index that combined medium and small communities into one list. For the complete lists and methodology, please visit the NCAR website. In addition to the Arts Vibrancy Index, NCAR provides scores for every U.S. county on its heat map, based on measures of arts dollars, arts providers, government support, and socio-economic and other leisure characteristics.

"In the current climate, it is more important than ever to recognize the vital role that the arts play in creating dynamic places to live, work, and visit, and the Arts Vibrancy Index shows us that this is the case in communities all across the country, not just in large cities and on the coasts," said Dr. Zannie Giraud Voss, director of NCAR. "The index helps us understand what factors contribute to making an urban area artistically vibrant and culturally rich, and illustrates how vibrancy manifests in a wide variety of forms that are often tied to that community's unique identity." The report complements each listed community's scores with its story of what makes it unique and dynamic.

"The arts are an underappreciated sector in America. As this report demonstrates, the idea that they are for an elite few is simply not true. The arts generate tremendous amounts of tourism dollars, enhance and encourage a love of learning, and connect diverse communities and people," said Karen Brooks Hopkins, NCAR's Nasher Haemisegger Fellow. "Arts institutions house our greatest treasures and serve as gathering places for people to come together in a shared appreciation for human expression. At the end of the day, when all else is said and done, art is the only thing that endures from generation to generation to generation."

The overall index is composed of three dimensions: supply, demand, and government support. Supply is assessed by the total number of arts providers in the community, including the number of arts and culture organizations and employees, independent artists, and entertainment firms. Demand is gauged by the total nonprofit arts dollars in the community, including program revenue, contributed revenue, total expenses, and total compensation. Lastly, the level of government support is based on state and federal arts dollars and grants.

Beyond the specific rankings, select findings in the Arts Vibrancy Index include:
- *Every region of the country is represented in the index*: Arts vibrancy is not exclusive to large, coastal metropolitan areas—cities large and small from every region appear in the index. While large and medium metropolitan areas are represented in all regions of the country, the list of small communities is dominated by those located in western (Alaska, Colorado, Montana, Utah, Wyoming) and northeastern states (Massachusetts, New York, and Vermont).
- *Rankings of communities that have previously made the list are in constant flux:* Many factors contribute to these shifts, including transformations in a city's cultural scene (for example, through the opening of a large arts center), changes in population size, or the extent to which a city's cultural activity can attract or involve its neighboring communities.
- *Arts vibrancy takes many shapes and forms*. Some communities have large, impressive nonprofit cultural institutions (e.g. Los Angeles, Denver, Newark, and Santa Fe), some have an abundance of smaller organizations and venues (e.g. Asheville, NC; Juneau, AK; and Missoula, MT), while others are particularly attractive to artists (e.g. Breckenridge, CO and Bozeman, MT) or to tourists (e.g. Barnstable Town, MA and Vineyard Haven, MA). Some cities are robust and strong in a variety of arts sectors (e.g. Pittsfield, MA), while others excel in one particular art form (Nashville). Some communities also received high levels of government support, including Minneapolis/St. Paul, New York, and Summit Park, UT.
- *Vibrancy in very large cities takes two distinct forms*: Some cities feature a strong concentration of arts vibrancy in the urban core with less going on in the surrounding areas

(e.g. Chicago and Philadelphia), while others feature vibrancy distributed evenly throughout the larger metropolitan area (e.g. Boston and Cambridge).

- *The majority of arts-vibrant cities have a population either under 300,000 or between 1,000,000 and 3,000,000.* This finding holds true even after analyzing medium and small communities separately.

The Lists

The full lists, with detailed information on each community, are available on the NCAR website, including scores on each of the three metrics of vibrancy, i.e. level of arts providers (supply), arts dollars (demand), and government support for the arts.

Large Cities

Among cities with populations of 1 million or more, the five most vibrant arts communities are as follows:

1. Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, DC-VA-MD-WV
2. New York-Jersey City-White Plains, NY-NJ
3. San Francisco-Redwood City-South San Francisco, CA
4. Nashville-Davidson-Murfreesboro-Franklin, TN
5. Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI

Pittsburgh, PA; Rochester, NY; and Richmond, VA rejoined the top 20 list this year, having ranked in 2015 but just missed the cut-off in 2016. In this year's top 20, they are ranked 16, 19, and 20, respectively. Only two cities did not move on the top 20 large communities list—Washington-Arlington-Alexandria, at #1 and Boston, at #6—while all other communities shifted in their rankings. In the top five rankings on this list, the biggest move was Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington trading places with Los Angeles-Long Beach-Glendale; L.A. ranked #5 last year, and now #7.

Medium Cities

Four communities with populations 100,000 to 1 million are new to the Top 10 medium city list: Bremerton-Silverdale, WA; Ithaca, NY; Asheville, NC; and Barnstable Town, MA, though none of these cities were in the top five:

1. Pittsfield, MA
2. Santa Fe, NM
3. San Rafael, CA
4. Missoula, MT
5. Burlington-South Burlington, VT

Small Cities

For small communities, defined as areas with an urban core of 10,000-50,000 people, four cities are making their debut on the list: Hudson, NY; Greenfield Town, MA; Oneonta, NY; and Juneau, AK. These new cities rank #5, #6, #7 and #8 in the Top 10 small communities list, respectively. The top five cities are:

1. Breckenridge, CO
2. Summit Park, UT
3. Bennington, VT
4. Bozeman, MT
5. Hudson, NY

About NCAR

In 2012, the Meadows School of the Arts and Cox School of Business at SMU launched the National Center for Arts Research (NCAR). The vision of NCAR is to act as a catalyst for the transformation and sustainability of the national arts and cultural community. The goals of the Center are to unlock insights on: 1) arts attendance and patronage; 2) understanding how managerial decisions, arts attendance, and patronage affect one another; and 3) fiscal trends and fiscal stability of the arts in the U.S., and to create an in-depth assessment of the industry that allows arts and cultural leaders to make more informed decisions and improve the health of their organizations. To work toward these goals, NCAR integrates data from DataArts and its Cultural Data Profile[1] and other national and government sources such as Theatre Communications Group, the League of American Orchestras, the National Endowment for the Arts, the Census Bureau, and the National Center for Charitable Statistics. NCAR makes its findings available free of charge to arts leaders, funders, policymakers, researchers, and the general public.

NCAR develops reports based on this uniquely comprehensive set of arts organizations' data. It assesses the industry from multiple perspectives, including sector/art form, geography, and size of the organization, and it determines what drives health from the organization's conditions and its community's characteristics. Recent publications include a white paper on diversity and equity in the arts, a white paper dispelling the myth that the arts are elitist, and reports on the health of the U.S. arts and cultural sector. In July 2016, NCAR launched the KIPI Dashboard, a free online diagnostic tool that allows arts organizations to benchmark their individual performance in nine finance and operations categories against their peers.

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[1] "DataArts is a nonprofit organization that empowers the arts and cultural sector with high-quality data and resources in order to strengthen its vitality, performance, and public impact. Any interpretation of the data is that of NCAR, not DataArts. For more information, visit www.culturaldata.org."

For more information, please visit the NCAR website at smu.edu/artsresearch.

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