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**HOUSTON'S ARTS AND CULTURE COMMUNITY THANKS  
HOUSTON MAYOR SYLVESTER TURNER FOR HIS LEADERSHIP  
At 2016 Houston Arts Reception for Elected Officials**

**HOUSTON (March 10, 2016)** – More than 500 people attended The 2016 Houston Arts Reception for Elected Officials on Monday, February 29, 2016, at the Wortham Theater Center. The city's five cultural districts hosted the reception produced by Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) to welcome Sylvester Turner as Houston's new mayor and to show their appreciation of his leadership during the 84th Texas Legislative Session to procure \$5 million in new funding for the state's cultural and fine arts districts.

All five Houston cultural districts received Texas Commission on the Arts funding, accounting for more than a third of the total \$1.5 million allocated for this fiscal year.

Houston Mayor Sylvester Turner praised the city's cultural districts for creating exciting collaborative arts and culture projects that benefit Houston as a whole. "I am proud of the diverse cultural programming across our metropolitan area, and I am proud of the working artists and 500-plus arts organizations creating thought-provoking work in all of our communities," Turner said at the reception. "I love Houston. We all do, and we all want the city and its residents to succeed and live full lives with access to great arts and culture."

Mayor Turner said it was a privilege to work for the cultural district funding, and he remains committed to investing in the arts in Houston. "What makes us who we are is the arts community, which reflects the diversity of this city," Mayor Turner said. "We must work to take the arts in this city to another level. Now is the time for the Houston arts community to go bold."

Representing the cultural districts at the reception were Cynthia Alvarado (Midtown Cultural Arts & Entertainment District), Diane Barber (East End Cultural District), Julie Farr (Houston Museum District), Kathryn McNiel (Theater District), and Susannah Mitchell (Washington Avenue Arts District).

Houston Grand Opera Managing Director Perryn Leech welcomed the crowd that included City Controller Chris Brown, City Council members, civic leadership and a robust and diverse representation of the city's arts and culture community. On behalf of the cultural districts and the arts and culture community, HAA President + CEO Jonathon Glus thanked Mayor Turner for his leadership.

The program concluded with City of Houston Poet Laureate Dr. Robin Davidson and her reading of her poem "To Speak of Rivers, after Langston Hughes," a beautiful homage to Houston and the city's African-American artists that was written especially for the occasion.

Houston First was the Underwriter Host for the reception.

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### **About Dr. Robin Davidson**

Born in Trieste, Italy, to American parents, Dr. Davidson is a poet, translator, and assistant professor of Literature and creative writing at the University of Houston-Downtown. She holds a B.A. in French from the University of Texas at Austin, and M.A. and Ph.D. degrees in Creative Writing and Literature from the University of Houston. She is the author of *Luminous Other* (Ashland Poetry Press, 2013) which won the 2012 Richard Snyder Memorial Prize, as well as two chapbooks: *City that Ripens on the Tree of the World* (Calypso Editions) and *Kneeling in the Dojo* (Finishing Line Press). She is co-translator, with Ewa Elzbieta Nowakowska, of *The New Century: Poems by Ewa* from the Polish (Northwestern University Press).

In 2003 - 2004 Dr. Davidson served as Fulbright professor of American literature at the Jagiellonian University in Kraków, Poland. Her poems and translations have appeared in such American literary journals as *AGNI*, *The Paris Review*, *Gulf Coast*, *Tampa Review*, *91st Meridian*, *Literary Imagination*, and *Words Without Borders*. She is the recipient of a 2009 National Endowment for the Arts Literature Fellowship in Translation. She currently teaches creative writing as associate professor of English for the University of Houston-Downtown, serves as the faculty advisor for UHD's literary and visual arts magazine, *The Bayou Review*, and served as president of the board of directors for the Writers in the Schools program from 2008 - 2010. She also is the recipient of a 2009 Houston Arts Alliance Individual Artist Grant for her poetry.

### **About East End Cultural District**

The East End Cultural District is Houston's newest cultural district rooted in one of the city's oldest communities. Geographically situated between downtown and the port, the East End Cultural District is home to a number of historic sites and an impressive and ever-growing collection of visual and performing arts venues, artist studios, makerspaces, urban farms, iconic restaurants, outdoor murals, and reimaged parks and public spaces (such as The Esplanade at Navigation) that serve as hubs for cultural activity. Located in close proximity to Buffalo Bayou and the recently re-designed Guadalupe Plaza Park, The Esplanade houses the weekly East End Street Market, offering locally sourced food and artist-made products in a unique urban setting that is quintessentially Houston.

### **About Houston Arts Alliance**

Houston Arts Alliance (HAA) is a nonprofit, public-private initiative that invests in Houston's arts and cultural sector, advances Houston's reputation as an arts and culture destination, and works to elevate the quality of life for all Houstonians through arts and culture. As the city's designated local arts agency, HAA provides programs and services for the arts and cultural sector and awards approximately 225 grants annually to nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and individual artists. The Alliance is the custodian of the city's art collection; takes permanent and temporary art to Houston's public spaces; presents free Folklife + Traditional Arts programming; nurtures up-and-coming arts organizations through its capacity building programs; connects the business community with the arts; convenes the field as necessary, and provides the latest information and research on cultural policy, economic development and Houston's folklife. For more information, visit [houstonartsalliance.com](http://houstonartsalliance.com). For events in the region, visit [Artshound.com](http://Artshound.com).

### **About Houston First Corporation**

Houston First Corporation operates the city's finest convention and arts facilities to position Houston as a world-class destination. In 2014, Houston First and the Greater Houston Convention and Visitors Bureau aligned their operations to gain additional resources and create a single clear voice for the city under the brand Visit Houston. Houston First owns the Hilton Americas-Houston hotel and manages more than 11 city-owned buildings, plazas and parking facilities. Properties include the George R. Brown Convention Center, Miller Outdoor Theatre, Wortham Theater Center and Jones Hall for the Performing Arts. For more information, visit [HoustonFirst.com](http://HoustonFirst.com) and [VisitHouston.com](http://VisitHouston.com).

### **About Houston Museum District**

Nestled between Houston's bustling downtown and the world-renowned Texas Medical Center is the Museum District, a synergistic collection of 19 institutions, each with its own specialty. Brimming with masterpieces, cutting-edge life science, historic relics and contemporary works, the Museum District offers a wealth of culture to all. The variety of exhibitions, collections, workshops and performances makes a destination that is the perfect space to explore on foot or bike. Houston's Museum District provides unparalleled opportunities for education, inspiration and recreation.

### **About Midtown Cultural Arts & Entertainment District**

Midtown Houston is comprised of two organizations committed to making Midtown a model of urban living in the center of Houston, Texas. The two organizations are the Midtown Redevelopment Authority / Tax Increment Reinvestment Zone No. 2 and the Midtown Management District. These organizations undertake projects with widespread benefit to the area that are beyond the ability of individual property owners to provide. Both organizations share the common vision of shaping Midtown into a thriving, pedestrian-friendly urban community, but the responsibilities of each organization differs. For more information about the Midtown Management District or the Midtown Cultural Arts and Entertainment District, please visit [www.houstonmidtown.com](http://www.houstonmidtown.com) or call 713-526-7577.

### **About Theater District Houston**

Houston's Theater District is an impressive cultural and entertainment center in downtown Houston. The District features seven world-renowned resident companies performing all of the major performing arts disciplines—opera, ballet, music and theater—a distinction that only five American cities can claim. Together with many smaller organizations, the resident companies perform in four venues: Jones Hall, Wortham Theater Center, Alley Theater and Hobby Center for the Performing Arts. Organizations include: The Alley Theatre, Da Camera of Houston, Houston Ballet, Houston Grand Opera, Houston Symphony, Society for the Performing Arts Houston and Theatre Under The Stars.

### **About Washington Avenue Arts District**

The Washington Avenue Arts District encompasses the historic First and Sixth Wards of Houston. Home to several converted warehouse buildings housing over 300 working artist studios, the District boasts what is believed to be the highest concentration of working artists in the United States! The area offers a unique brand of cultural excitement, with fantastic establishments for eating, gathering and shopping, and a variety of live-work spaces, restored homes, cultural institutions and independent creative studios, all just a mile from downtown Houston.