

# HOW TO MAKE **GO-GO** 'OFFICIAL' POST COVID-19

Save Black businesses \* Save Black culture \* Save Black Lives \* Save Returning Citizens  
Count Black voices at the Census and at the polls in 2020 and beyond.



AN ADVISORY REPORT BY **DON'T MUTE DC**

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## ABOUT



Don't Mute DC is a collective of cultural activists working tirelessly to amplify the voices of marginalized and displaced Washingtonians and to preserve and sustain the city's singular art form, Go-Go music. This report describes priorities, instruments and key areas of investment to inform the District of Columbia's Plan to make Go-Go the Official Music of Washington, D.C. At a pivotal time in the city's history, these investments in the humanities will benefit Washingtonians for generations to come.

# **PREFACE: Go-Go in the Time of COVID-19**

Released exactly one year after Don't Mute DC won the return of Go-Go music to Donald Campbell's Central Communications/Metro PCS store at the corner of 7<sup>th</sup> and Florida Avenue NW, this report has gained newfound urgency in the age of COVID-19. Days after being named the Official Music of Washington, D.C., the Coronavirus forced the Go-Go industry—and the Black mom-and-pop businesses that support it—to essentially collapse. On March 19<sup>th</sup>, new “social distancing” rules led law enforcement to break up a “virtual” Go-Go concert by UCB because more than 10 band members performed before a livestreamed audience.

While this new reality is jolting, these regulations only echo previous government ‘social distancing’ policies that have historically impacted DC’s Black music and culture. Whites-only performance venues, racially segregated education, housing and employment policies, and most recently, mass incarceration, all shaped the social boundaries of Go-Go. In the 1980s, D.C. policymakers targeted go-go in curfew laws, and in the early 2000s police and alcohol beverage boards criminalized the music.

Go-Go managed to survive. And it was the advocacy of Go-Go artists—along with Don't Mute DC and the DC Nurses Association—that helped to convince the Council of DC in May 2019 to reverse its decision to close United Medical Center, the only hospital for the 160,000 residents of Ward 7 and 8. The struggle of this beleaguered institution continues, but the facility must remain open to serve residents East of the River in the midst of a pandemic that is disproportionately impacting Black Americans.

As COVID-19 continues to wreak havoc on Go-Go, the community must mobilize. Around the world, trillions of dollars are flowing to bail out powerful institutions impacted by the epidemic. President Trump included \$25 million in relief to Washington, D.C.’s Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts. Germany’s COVID relief package includes a \$551 million fund to artists and freelancers in the cultural sector. In New Orleans, funders are providing housing and health support for musicians currently in crisis. As D.C. Arts and Humanities Commissioner Cora Masters Barry noted in her powerful advocacy for artists during the pandemic: “Behind every paintbrush and saxophone is a human being.” We need to care as much as we do about preserving buildings, paintings and banks as we do our most precious human resources.

Go-Go industry is in dire need of an intervention—but this need not only be a bailout. This report urges the city to not waste this crisis, and to seize moment to make key investments in a previously untapped tourism resource that *will* rebound after the pandemic. Go-go music is akin to the Cherry Blossoms that sprout each Spring, or the sounds of the Potomac River. It is a vital, irreplaceable, natural resource. As we mark an intense year of art and activism, this report describes how to protect Go-Go as an essential voice for future generations of Washingtonians—and share it with the world.

Follow our 2020 campaign, @MakeGoGoForever on IG, Twitter and Facebook to stay updated.

# **REPORT METHODOLOGY**

- This report draws from the following data sources:
- More than 250 people registered for the Don't Mute DC Call to Action Conference Nov. 16, 2019. A group of approximately 20 people participated in the "Make Go-Go Official" interactive panel and brainstorming session at the Anacostia Arts Center.
- Approximately 75 people attended Don't Mute DC's Go-Go Town Hall at the Kennedy Center on Feb. 25, 2020.
- 77 members of the Go-Go community filled out a 7-question online survey. These participants were recruited using purposive snowball sampling.
- This report also includes input from our partners at the Howard University, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Culture, the National Endowment for the Arts, and Go-Go Radio Live.

# **BACKGROUND**

On Feb. 19, 2020, D.C. Mayor Muriel Bowser signed B23-317:  
The “Go-Go Official Designation Act”



LEFT to RIGHT: Don't Mute DC Co-Founder Ronald Moten, Sugar Bear from EU, Mayor Muriel Bowser and Ward 5 Councilman Kenyan McDuffie. (Photo credit: Twitter)

The law authored by Councilman McDuffie requires that within 240 days, the Mayor create a plan:

To “support, preserve, and archive go-go music and its history, including the responsibilities of various District agencies such as the Archives, the Office of Cable Television, Film, and Music Entertainment, and the District of Columbia Public Library.”



# GLOBAL MEDIA COVERAGE



- [The Economist](#), Feb. 20, 2020
- [The Washington Post](#) Feb. 20, 2020
- [Washington Informer](#) Feb. 20, 2020
- [WAMU 88.5 \(NPR\)](#) Feb. 19, 2020
- [The Fader Magazine](#) Feb. 28, 2020
- [Forbes magazine](#), Feb. 25, 2020
- WUSA Ch. 9 did a live broadcast from the Feb. 25, 2020 Go-Go Town Hall @ the Kennedy Center's The Reach [Part 1](#); [Part2](#)



On Feb. 25, 2020, less than a week after Go-Go became “Official,” Don’t Mute DC invited musicians, advocates, educators, and members of the industry to participate in a **Go-Go Town Hall** at the Kennedy Center.



During the two-hour meeting, key influencers shared their priorities under the new law. LEFT to RIGHT: Forever First Lady **Cora Masters Barry**, Central Communications/Metro PCS Owner **Donald Campbell**, *Go-Go Live* author **Dr. Natalie Hopkins**; Center: **DJ Supa Dan**, Backyard Band’s **Anwan “Big G” Glover**, and **Crazy Legs** (John Pearson) of the Beat Ya Feet Kings. Following a brief presentation by Don’t Mute DC, participants broke into three brainstorming groups to discuss: Funding priorities, the 2020 Go-Go Awards and Go-Go Museum.





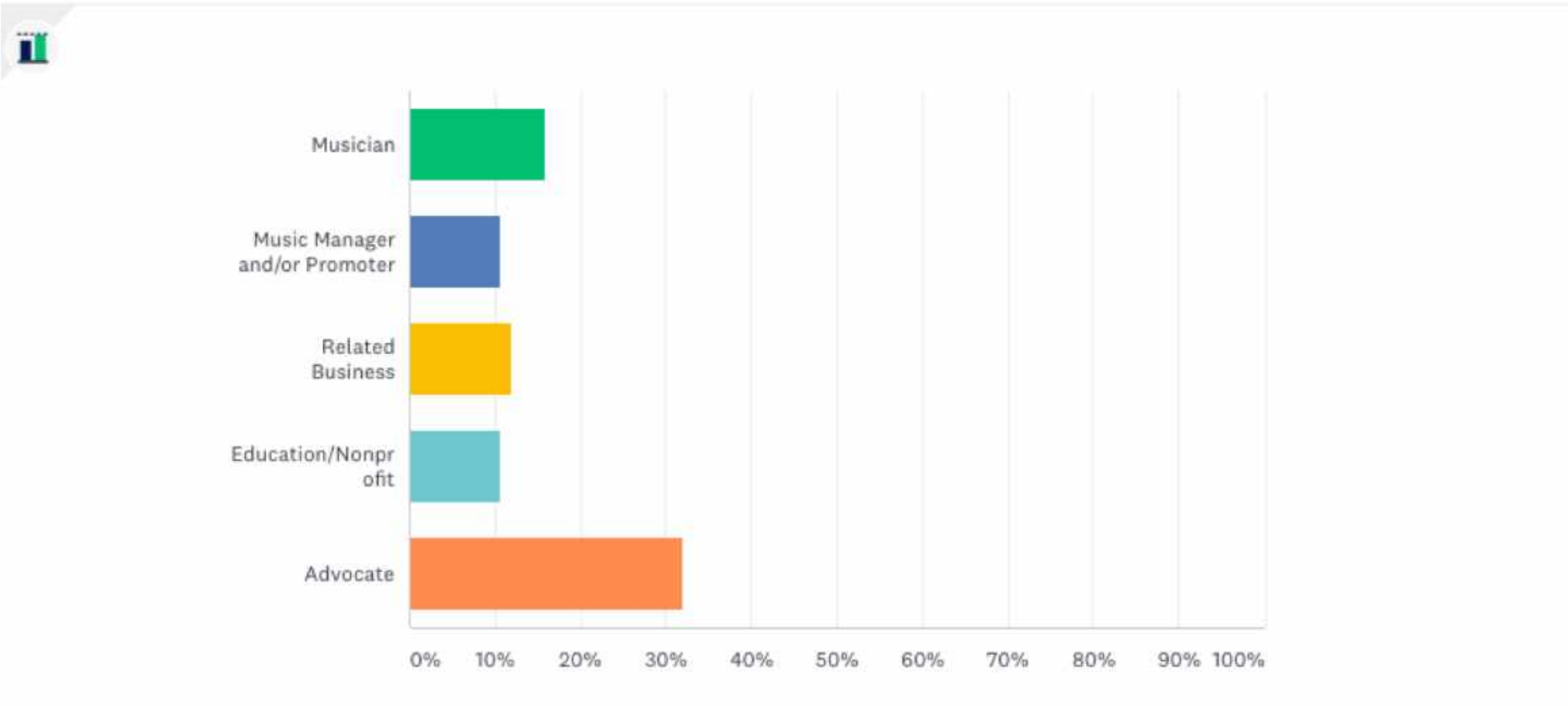
D.C. Commission on the Arts & Humanities Chair **Kay Kendall** introduces herself at the Go-Go Town Hall. Seated to her left is Commissioner **Cora Masters Barry** and legendary bassist **Michael “Funky Ned” Neal** (veteran of Rare Essence, Maxwell and Meshell Ndegeocello). All Photos by Stefan Costner except when noted.

## **DIGITAL SURVEY DESIGN**

- Q1: Contact Information/Location
- Q2: Do you plan to attend the 7 p.m. Feb. 25, 2020 Go-Go forum at the Kennedy Center's The Reach Center, 2700 F Street, NW.
- Q3: What is your relationship to Go-Go Music and Culture?
- Q4: What would you like to see in the Go-Go Museum & Cafe?
- Q5: What would you like to see the city invest in to make go-go the Official Music of Washington, D.C.?
- Q6: How would you rank priorities for Go-Go Funding?
- Q7: Would you join a Make Go-Go Forever Task Force?

# What is your relationship to Go-Go Music and Culture?

Answered: 75 Skipped: 2



## **GEOGRAPHIC BREAKDOWN**

- 42 % of survey respondents lived in District of Columbia
- 31 % lived in in Maryland
- 6 % live in Virginia
- 21 % did not say.



Q5 What would you like to see the city invest in to make go-go the Official Music of Washington, D.C.?

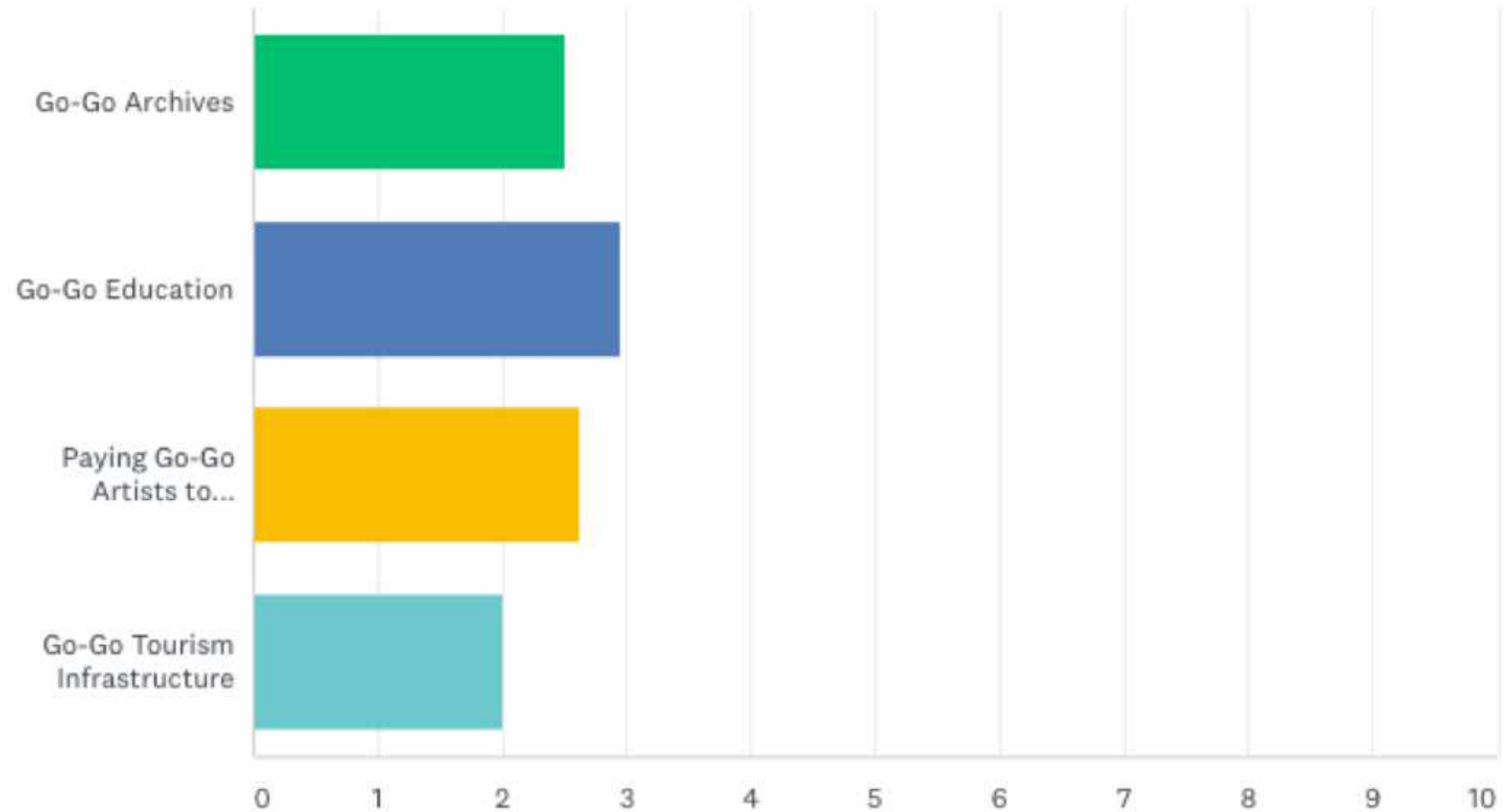
events funding museum see DC Go Go programs artists  
schools Teach bands perform music youth  
GoGo gogo music go-go education history play venues  
support Invest official Yes





## How would you rank priorities for Go-Go Funding?

Answered: 72 Skipped: 5



# POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. **PAY GO-GO ARTISTS.** Pay direct grant support to Go-Go artists to: perform locally, at official city celebrations, airports, Metro and Union Station; tour and record original music; establish Master/Apprentice programs (see details on page 16)
- B. **MANDATE GO-GO CURRICULA IN K-12 EDUCATION.** Scale initiatives such as the “Teach the Beat” program enacted in 2013 by Teaching for Change. Mandate Go-Go curriculum in PreK, 4<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> grades in DC public and charter schools. Identify all areas that the city has historically invested in Go-Go, for example, the Showmobiles of the Dept. of Public Works, DC Summer Jobs programs, and District of Columbia Public School marching bands that have introduced DC youth to go-go music.
- C. **FUND GO-GO ARCHIVES.** Fund preservation of major collections, including that of Donald Campbell of Central Communications and Nico Hobson of Go-Go Radio Live, and Kato Hammond of TMOTTGOGO, in addition to identifying other important Go-Go collections that should be preserved in city archives.
- D. **INVEST IN GO-GO TOURISM INFRASTRUCTURE.** City agencies such as EVENTS DC and other Tourism-related agencies, the Department of Parks and Recreation, and Department of General Services should set aside portions of their budgets to invest in Go-Go.
- E. **FUND ONGOING STUDIES OF THE GO-GO CREATIVE ECONOMY.** Establish the Chuck Brown Endowed Chair in Digital and Cultural Studies at a D.C. historically black university.

For details, see Appendices A and B with open-ended responses.

# SUSTAIN THE GO-GO TRADITION

In addition to providing direct support to artists, the city should fund programs that preserve and sustain the Go-Go tradition for future generations. “**Master-Apprentice**” programs have been among the most durable and practical initiatives to support regional “folk” arts programs, which are typically housed within state or city arts or humanities agencies. DC is one of only a handful of jurisdictions in the U.S. that does not have an office of folklife, which is supported by the National Endowment for the Arts. Master-Apprentice programs are among the best examples of a direct investment in ensuring transmission of knowledge, skills, insight, histories, protocols particular to community-based art forms. The Alliance of California Traditional Arts (<https://www.actaonline.org/program/apprenticeship-program/>) and the Maryland State Arts Council’s master-apprentice program (<https://www.msac.org/grants/folklife-apprenticeship>) are two examples. Master-apprentice relationships can be used for one-on-one learning and knowledge transmission. They also can be used with larger ensembles and public programs that are necessary or particular to a tradition. The city should support a series of annual events and programs that highlight or honor the work of the Go-Go artists and their apprentices.

In addition, the city could establish a “Go-Go Laureate” and “Go-Go Masters” positions modeled on the National Endowment for the Arts two national-level individual artist “fellowships:” “Jazz masters” <https://www.arts.gov/honors/jazz> and “National Heritage Fellows” <https://www.arts.gov/honors/heritage> (Chuck Brown was once an NEA fellow.)

**A note on an Go-Go grant review process.** Because of Go-Go’s history of exclusion from the arts commission funding, these investments must be accelerated, and the paneling processes must be customized to fit Go-Go’s unique position and needs. Committees or panels reviewing funding through these grants should be a combination of Go-Go music specialists and generalists who have broad experience and/or knowledge in musical apprenticeship programs, as well as artists/community experts.

The paneling process must be set up in collaboration with go-go artists to ensure that they follow the unique cultural logic, assets and opportunities that characterize Go-Go.

# **BUILD GO-GO'S ORGANIZATIONAL CAPACITY**

There have been previous efforts such as the Go-Go Coalition that had little official funding or support and eventually went defunct.

The city should boost Go-Go's organizational capacity through an umbrella "Make Go-Go Forever Task Force" co-chaired by **Anwan "Big G" Glover, Michelle Blackwell & Others**. Task force body will include 62 participants who volunteered to participate at the February 2020 Kennedy Center Go-Go Town Hall. The nonprofit Anacostia Coordinating Council has agreed to be the fiscal agent. In addition, there should be task forces, and eventually organizational representation in the following areas:

- 1. Lead Talkers/Band Leaders.** Frank Sirius & Lil Chris & Black Bo and Others.
- 2. Percussionists.** Paul "Buggy" Edwards, Keith "Sauce" Robertson, Shannon Browne and Others. To help define the sound, what is and what is not Go-Go. How to pass on the tradition.
- 3. Rhythm Section.** Keyboards, guitar, bass. Sweet Cherie, Marcus Young, Marcus Johnson & Others.
- 4. Women in Go-Go.** Gender inclusion. She Cranks/Be'la Dona leader Sweet Cherie, Michelle Blackwell & Others.
- 5. Go-Go Archives.** Nico Hobson, Don Campbell, Kato Hammond & Others.
- 6. Sound Engineering.** Bobby Marshall. Googie, Deuce 9 & Others.
- 7. Education/Research.** Charles Stephenson & JuJu House & Sweet Cherie and Others who have developed Go-Go educational programming in DC schools.
- 8. Go-Go Awards Task Force.** Latita Faulk, Michelle Blackwell & Others.
- 9. Go-Go Museum & Café Task Force.** Brenda Jones, Frank Sirius, Maleke Glee & Others.

# INVEST IN GO-GO TOURISM

## BUILD GO-GO INFRASTRUCTURE

D.C. should learn from models in other cities that have embraced their musical traditions and found them to be powerful economic engines.

For instance, in 2006, the Nashville Convention & Visitors Corp created a 501(c)(3) foundation to “enhance its programs, providing more education, training, and research benefiting Nashville citizens, the workforce of its hospitality industry, and visitors to ‘Music City.’ ”

In 2003, this organization set a goal to grow Nashville's second-largest industry from \$3 billion to \$5 billion. They reached that goal within ten years. Today, music is \$7 billion industry, generating one-third of all visitor spending in the state of Tennessee.

<https://www.visitmusiccity.com/explore-nashville/music/music-scene>

## INTEGRATE GO-GO IN CITY BRANDING

Additional branding on D.C. city websites and outward-facing materials could integrate the city's Go-Go music culture in line with cities such as New Orleans, Austin and Chicago.

- <https://www.neworleans.com/things-to-do/>
- <https://www.austintexas.org>
- <https://www.choosechicago.com>





# FUNDING MECHANISMS

- **Establish the Chuck Brown Endowment for the Go-Go Performing Arts** with an initial investment of \$40 million. The top 10 Go-Go bands have combined annual revenues of approximately \$4.8 million. A 6% interest, this Endowment would pay out \$2.4 million in interest for grants annually.
- **Establish a DCAHC “Go-Go” Cohort.** Adopt legislation to set aside 15 percent of all grant funding to Go-Go programs from the D.C. Commission on the Arts and Humanities.

# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS AND THANKS

Don't Mute DC would first of all, like to thank the MUSICIANS who fight everyday to preserve the tradition, and who have also lent their talents to for the 17 cultural activations that we did in our first year:

**TOB; UCB; TCB; BACKYARD BAND; MICHELLE BLACKWELL; BLACK ALLEY; SUGAR BEAR and EU; RARE ESSENCE; PROPER UTENSILS Feat. Jas Funk; THE ROYAL POCKET; FRANK SIRIUS & CO.; FIRST LADIES OF GO-GO; PERSEVIR BAND; BIG 6 BRASS BAND.**

Thanks to the 80,304 people from all 50 states and 94 countries who signed our Don't Mute DC Go-Go Music and Culture petition in April 2019.

THANKS TO ALL THE DC ARTS ADVOCATES WHO CONTRIBUTED IDEAS TO THIS REPORT AND THE KENNEDY CENTER'S GO-GO TOWN HALL: Maiesha Rashad, Tony Lewis Jr., Kato Hammond, Bootsie Vega (Salih Williams), Maurice Shorter, Jas. Funk, Reo Edwards, Darryll Brooks, Tenika Brown, Sojin Kim, Cora Masters Barry, Latita Faulk, Ralph Anwan Glover, Michelle Blackwell, Lil Chris, Black Bo, Sweet Cherie, Latita Faulk, KK Brown, Frank Sirius, Nico Hobson, Donald Campbell, Kay Kendall, Cliff Murphy, Funky Ned, Bobbie Marshall, Melissa Weber (DJ Soul Sister), Cherita "Cookie" Whiting. Apologies to everyone we left out—you know who you are. Thank you for all you do for go-go.

THANKS TO COMMUNITY PARTNERS: United Planning Organization, Anacostia Coordinating Council, Central Communications, Check It Enterprises, Howard University Dept. of Communication, Culture and Media Studies, Smithsonian Center for Folklife and Culture, Eaton Workshop, Communities for Just Schools, Red Dot Foundation, DC Fiscal Policy Institute, Douglass Community Land Trust, The Capstone Group, Bullying is Not Dope, XI Magazine, Mayor's Office of African American Affairs, Brink Media, Wearegogomusic.com, Go-Go Radio Live, Tim Chapman Development, Blue Skye Construction, Anacostia Arts Center, John F. Kennedy Center for the Performing Arts "Culture Caucus,"

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# ABOUT the EDITORS



- **CHARLES C. STEPHENSON JR.** is the co-author of *The Beat: Go-Go Music From Washington, D.C.* (University of Mississippi Press), a former manager of the Go-Go band EU, former chair of the D.C. Arts and Humanities Commission.
- **SUZANNE GOODNEY LEA, Ph.D.** is an educator and sociologist who specializes in civic engagement and social change. She has taught at Trinity University, Gallaudet University and University of the District of Columbia.

This report was a truly a communal effort. Stephenson and Lea shared the stage as panelist and moderator at the Don't Mute DC Call to Action Conference in November. They later both joined the DMDC Board of Advisors, and agreed to help the collective with this report. Lea advised on the report's survey methodology and analysis. Stephenson drew on his decades of experience in arts policy in general and Go-Go specifically to advise on how to best synthesize and present the data and records that Don't Mute DC has collected over the past year.