

Arts + Social Impact Explorer Fact Sheet

ARTS + INFRASTRUCTURE

OVERVIEW

The intersection of the arts and infrastructure accrues economic and social impacts through arts infrastructure, such as performing arts centers and public art pieces as well as through the use of arts and culture to improve overall infrastructure in communities. More recently, artists have begun to collaborate with government officials and businesses on infrastructure planning efforts to improve community engagement, increase equity in planning, and design innovative, unintrusive, and environmentally-friendly buildings. Infrastructure is all around us, and the arts play a vital role in making that infrastructure as impactful and equitable as possible.

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IMPACT POINTS

76%

MORE GROWTH IN JOBS AND BUSINESSES

Research shows that when higher educational institutions invest in arts infrastructure, the communities around them experience at least 76% more growth in jobs and businesses than similar communities where the schools don't make that investment.¹

\$1B+

ANNUAL ECONOMIC IMPACT

Culture-based infrastructure overhauls have been shown to take blighted areas and turn them into economic powerhouses generating over \$1B in economic impact each year, and increasing employment by 300%.²

THE ARTS FOSTER PUBLIC-PRIVATE PARTNERSHIPS TO STRENGTHEN INFRASTRUCTURE.

In towns of all sizes, city councils and local government agencies often transcended traditional turfs and training to specifically to foster arts-driven downtown revitalization.³

86%

OF ARTS PARTICIPANTS WANT TO GET MORE INVOLVED IN CIVIC ISSUES.

Arts activities increase residents' interest in getting involved in local issues and projects, including discussions of infrastructure. 86% of participants want to be involved in future projects and people living where projects occurred were more than twice as likely to be civically engaged as those whose blocks did not have projects.⁴

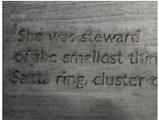
THE ARTS IMPROVE LIVABILITY

Research from the National Endowment for the Arts shows that increased presence per capita of arts and culture non-profits and arts and entertainment establishments correlates strongly with increased livability.⁵



EXAMPLES OF PRACTICE

Sidewalk Poetry



Sidewalk Poetry is a systems-based work that allows city residents to claim the sidewalks as their book pages. Over 1,000 entries have been stamped onto sidewalks from a collection that now includes 54 individual pieces all written by Saint Paul residents. Today, everyone in Saint Paul now lives within a 10-minute walk of a Sidewalk Poem.

https://publicartstpaul.org/project/poetry/#about_the_project

pasp@publicartstpaul.org

image: A sample poem on a sidewalk in St. Paul, MN.

Informational Kiosk and Signage Sculpture



Sculptor Joe Chirchirillo created an informational kiosk and signage sculpture on the corners of Main and Houghton streets, as well as West and

Water streets, in North Bennington, VT.

<https://northbennington.org/village/>

thefund@northbennington.org

image: The signage structure was influenced by signage on the campus of nearby Bennington College.

Housing2Home



Housing2Home, a joint program between The Haven and New City Arts, promotes stability among formerly-homeless clients by combining state-funded rental subsidies with creative interventions.

<https://newcityarts.org/vocation/housing2home>

maureen@newcityarts.org

image: Front room area of one of the examples of art provided into a home in the program.

ART + INFRASTRUCTURE



ART+ INFRASTRUCTURE is a public art project focused on adding vibrant art to lonely underpasses, quiet passageways, and often-

forgotten structures.

<https://omahabydesign.org/art-infrastructure>

info@omahabydesign.org

image: Artist Gerard Pefung completing a mural for the Art + Infrastructure project.

Ask the River



Ask the River is a public art installation to inspire reconnection with the Connecticut River. The Downtown Brattleboro Alliance, in collaboration

with several stakeholders, conceived of Ask the River to think about the Transportation Center Alleyway in new ways. The result was choreographed performances that animate the streets and walls of Brattleboro and Montpelier with streams of community members and 25-foot-long cyanotype banners. The banners are cut up into scarves and worn by a multitude of makers, connecting them and creating a convergence of river awareness. The Brattleboro town plan considers the importance of a path from the river into the town.

<https://www.brattleboromuseum.org/2019/06/01/ask-the-river/>

info@brattleboromuseum.org

image: Observers of the panels installed as part of the Ask the River exhibit at the Brattleboro Museum.

top image: A sample poem from Sidewalk Poetry on a sidewalk in St. Paul, MN.

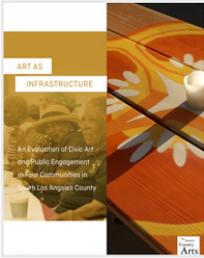
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READING LIST

Report: Art as Infrastructure



This research from the LA County Arts Commission evaluates the success of arts-based strategies in shifting perceptions, increasing positive activity, reducing graffiti vandalism, building a sense of community ownership and building capacity for future arts and culture activities at four sites.

<https://www.lacountyarts.org/article/report-art-infrastructure>

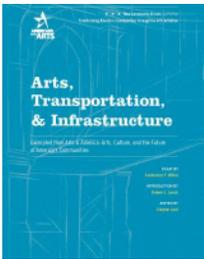
The Arts and Planning Toolkit: Art and Infrastructure



This website from the Metropolitan Area Planning Council includes case studies of arts and infrastructure projects.

<https://artsandplanning.mapc.org/category/art-and-infrastructure/>

Arts, Transportation and Infrastructure



The Americans for the Arts essay examines the linkages between transportation and arts and culture. This article is an excerpt from the book Arts & America: Arts, Culture, and the Future of American Communities

<https://www.americansforthearts.org/node/90694>

How Artists Help Build Equitable, Empathetic Infrastructure



This op-ed from Next City outlines the case for art as infrastructure, particularly in pursuit of equity.

<https://nextcity.org/urbanist-news/how-artists-help-build-equitable-empathetic-infrastructure>



ORGANIZATIONS

Smart Growth America

Smart Growth America is a national advocacy and policy organization that envisions a country where no matter where you live, or who you are, you can enjoy living in a place that is healthy, prosperous, and resilient. They empower communities through technical assistance, advocacy, and thought leadership to realize a shared vision of livable places, healthy people, and shared prosperity.

<https://smartgrowthamerica.org/>

Cultural Policy Center at NORC at the University of Chicago

The Cultural Policy Center's longest-running continuous project is research on the cultural infrastructure of the United States. This national study of the organizational decisions behind, implementation strategies for, and consequences of the building boom in museums, theaters, and performing arts centers in the U.S. between 1994 and 2008. It is the first comprehensive analysis of cultural building in the United States to be carried out at this scale and depth..

<https://www.norc.org/Research/Projects/Pages/cultural-infrastructure-in-the-united-states.aspx>

Next City

Next City is a journalism site and thinktank. Next City's journalism centers marginalized voices while amplifying solutions to the problems that oppress people in cities. At a time when cities face rampant inequality and urgent challenges, Next City's work as a nonprofit is critical: by spreading real stories and workable ideas from one city to the next, we connect people, places and solutions that move our society toward justice and equity.

<https://nextcity.org/>

ArtPlace America

This national funding, research, and service organization for creative placemaking is a clearinghouse for much of the information on current arts-based community development practice.

<http://www.artplaceamerica.org>

Community Arts Stabilization Trust

Community Arts Stabilization Trust purchases and leases space for the exclusive use of nonprofit arts organizations. Without our support, some of San Francisco's most vital arts organizations might be forced to leave because of the rising cost of real estate.

<https://cast-sf.org/>

top image: A wall lined with cyanotype postcards as part of the Ask the River exhibit at the Brattleboro Museum. Photo by Michelle Frehsee

THANK YOU TO OUR SPONSORS



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Americans for the Arts developed this Fact Sheet as part of the Arts + Social Impact Explorer.

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