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THE SCENIC ROUTE

A PRIMER ON CREATIVE PLACEMAKING
IN TRANSPORTATION

OCTOBER 2015

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This report was made possible through the generous support of the Kresge Foundation.

The Kresge Foundation “focuses on the role arts and culture play in re-energizing the communities that have long been central to America’s social and economic life,” believing that “arts and culture are an integral part of life and, when embedded in cross-sector revitalization activity, can contribute to positive and enduring economic, physical, social and cultural change in communities.” Kresge also supported projects detailed in this report in Nashville, Portland, San Diego and Detroit.

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FOREWORD - A VIEW FROM THE FIELD

By Mark VanderSchaaf, Regional Planning Director, Metropolitan Council of Minneapolis-Saint Paul

Late in the 20th century, the urban sociologist W. V. Walter lamented that, “For the first time in human history, people are systematically building meaningless places.” As he saw it, the problem was that the building of our cities, towns and suburbs had become the province of “experts” focused on engineered solutions to problems as they defined them, with too little interaction with affected communities.

But he saw reason for hope:

Today, everyone yearns for renewal; but from a holistic perspective, what does the renewal of a city mean? It is not merely physical reconstruction, as many people think – demolishing slums and replacing them with new buildings. Historically, the renewal of a city was experienced as a mental and emotional transformation, an improvement of the spirit, a rebirth of psychic energies. (Walter, *Placeways*, pp. 2, 3)



Mark VanderSchaaf

The transportation field certainly had its role in the building of “meaningless places” in the modern era. The twin policies of urban renewal and freeway construction dealt a deadly blow to the quality of life in many cities during the mid-20th century.

My own city of Saint Paul, Minnesota, provided a tragic case study. Alan Altshuler’s 1966 classic study, *The City Planning Process: A Political Analysis*, documents the decimation of Rondo, Saint Paul’s once-thriving African American neighborhood by the routing of Interstate 94 in ways that disrupted a rich social fabric.

But as Walter suggests, recent decades have witnessed a growing sophistication and sensitivity to community on the part of those who plan transportation and land use. The interdisciplinary approach to placemaking has served as a focal point for the kinds of improvements that Walter was envisioning, giving thoughtful attention to integrating multimodal transportation with patterns of development and public spaces intended to support “mental and emotional transformation.”

While the practice of placemaking has already yielded good results in our nation’s cities, the more recent field of “creative placemaking” promises even better results. By bringing community-based arts and cultural activities into transportation and land use processes, our cities can begin not just to prepare for a better future, but perhaps to heal the wounds remaining from earlier planning errors. I’m proud that my own region is helping to lead the way in this new field, enabling us to repair at least some of the damage we inflicted upon ourselves 50 years ago. And I’m thrilled that Transportation for America has created a resource to help us all become even better creative place makers in years to come.

PART ONE: AN INTRODUCTION TO CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

WHAT IS CREATIVE PLACEMAKING?

There are several definitions of creative placemaking used by other well-respected groups we look to for guidance. But for the purposes of our work and this primer tailored specifically for transportation planners, public works staff and local officials, we use the following definition:

“In the transportation context, creative placemaking is an approach that deeply engages the arts, culture, and creativity, especially from underrepresented communities, in planning and designing projects so that the resulting communities better reflect and celebrate local culture, heritage and values.”

For the purposes of urban planning and development, the American Planning Association offers information that outlines the myriad ways that arts, culture and creativity manifest in our communities.¹ A modified excerpt:

The arts and culture field encompasses the performing, visual and fine arts, as well as applied arts including architecture and graphic design; crafts; film, digital media and video; humanities and historic preservation; literature; folklife; and other creative activities. “Culture” can be defined as the arts as well as the intangible shared beliefs, values and practices of a community. “Creativity” is sometimes used to describe the common elements of arts and culture, but this term encompasses other fields as well. The Bureau of Labor Statistics defines creativity as the development, design or creation of “new applications, ideas, relationships, systems or products, including artistic contributions.” As a whole, many forms of arts and culture naturally manifest as aspects of daily human activity.



One of John Mackie's dance steps installations in Seattle. Creative Commons Flickr photo by John Henderson. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/jbthescots/6858612077/>

¹ <https://www.planning.org/research/arts>

A NEW ERA REQUIRES NEW TOOLS

For those of you planning, designing and building transportation projects, creative placemaking is an emerging approach that every community should consider, and this primer can help you get started.

America's cities, towns and suburbs are rapidly changing and evolving, and transportation investments are playing a catalytic role in transforming communities. As of 2013, for example, there were more than 700 rapid bus and rail projects planned in 109 regions and all indications are that the number has grown since then.¹ Perhaps thousands more projects will retrofit urban roadways to accommodate multiple transportation modes, address bottlenecks or lay the groundwork for redevelopment and revitalization of older areas. All too often, however, major transportation projects in populated areas are disruptive to the surrounding community, and frequently disrupt or even displace existing residents and businesses.

Yet these projects offer a better opportunity than we've experienced in the past to take a more holistic — and humanistic — approach to integrating transportation infrastructure into existing and future communities.

As local leaders and transportation professionals, you know that projects like these live or die according to the degree of support from people in surrounding communities. You also know that your job is made much easier — and the impact of your work is greater — when communities have ownership and feel a sense of stewardship because they see their values, culture and heritage expressed in the end result. You measure success not only by the level of economic and population growth a project supports, but also by the ability to help rather than displace current residents.

Such displacement would be an especially disheartening outcome for redevelopment-oriented projects, because many actually aim to repair damage done to low-income neighborhoods and communities of color during previous rounds of urban renewal and freeway construction.

Beyond merely avoiding displacement, the best infrastructure projects incorporate local arts, culture and heritage and employ it as a building block of economic development so that neighborhoods become distinct and unique places, destinations in their own right.



Pop-up placemaking at the ACT: The Boulevard event in San Diego. Photo courtesy of City Heights Community Development Corporation.

¹ <http://reconnectingamerica.org/spacerace/spaceracemap.html>

WHY SHOULD I DO IT? WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS?

The benefits of engaging communities through their arts and culture, and creating new opportunities to showcase their expression, extend well beyond the neighborhood itself.

Arts and culture are part of what comprises the unique identity of a city. They exert an emotional pull that can help attract and keep talented workers. They're part of making places where companies and investors want to locate. Engaging the public through the arts and culture helps produce better projects and is part of building better places that are loved and cared for by a wider community of people.

Engaging the public through arts and culture also helps build trust and valuable relationships between local government, public agencies, community groups and the public writ large. That bedrock of trust and engagement is vital when attempting to build support for future transportation investments and can be the difference between success or failure when attempting to raise new money to invest in transportation.

Creative placemaking is not a silver bullet but one fresh template to consider for re-thinking how you partner with your community at a time when partnerships matter more than ever.

The rules of the game have changed

Three trends are at the center of the impetus for a better process.

Like it or not, transportation funding isn't the free ride that it used to be. The system for funding our nation's transportation infrastructure is more precarious, and the political climate is more divisive. Many in the public and in the agencies responsible for planning these projects are frustrated that our systems for engaging people are often token at best. Lastly, people feel too often that the projects that get built aren't what's needed most or don't deliver on the tangible benefits that were promised — and they lose confidence in the system as a result.

Engaging the public through the arts and culture helps produce better projects and is part of building better places that are loved and cared for by a wider community of people.



The Cultural Trail in Indianapolis is a good example of the power of planners engaging key community stakeholders during the planning process. Photo courtesy of the Indy Cultural Trail.

These broken systems are inextricably linked.

Broad-based public support that cuts across income, background, race, occupation, profession, neighborhood and many other factors are increasingly critical to getting projects finished, winning funding, defending against catastrophic cuts and proving your program's overall worth in a more austere fiscal reality. The communities that are succeeding and innovating understand this.

- The Town of [Normal, Illinois](#), had over 100 public meetings to establish regional support for its successful application to become the nation's first TIGER grant recipient to build a new downtown multimodal station and civic centerpiece for the town.
- The [Indy Connect](#) plan, driven for years by the will of thousands of citizens, substantively improved as the MPO, regional transit authority and transit operator conducted "the largest public outreach campaign in the region's history."
- Transit supporters in the Atlanta region led a massive, multi-year grassroots campaign to secure a ballot measure for [Clayton County, GA](#), to join the MARTA transit system.

The list goes on. It's been demonstrated time and time again that doing everything behind closed doors causes blowback and failure. Communities that are able to innovate do so with a broad base of support that they invest time and energy into building. Regional consensus has become necessary, though not sufficient on it's own, to be a "can-do" place that can raise new money for transportation or advance critical transportation projects.

It's not easy, but it's worth it in the end

Developing stronger regional consensus and vision and inviting new players beyond your traditional boards and stakeholder groups requires a certain give and take with partners. This may feel like risky, unfamiliar territory, especially when it comes to low-income and minority groups that may have a history of strained relationships, valid feelings of disenfranchisement and little understanding of, or tolerance for, your own very real constraints.

But to make complicated projects happen, win ballot measures for transportation or raise new funding, simply designing good projects isn't enough any more. You need people on your team, and getting things done requires more collaboration than ever before. Creative placemaking is one way to experiment with greater community ownership in a small, controlled way.

It can help you develop some of the relationships that you're going to need today and in the future. And it can help you break the cycle of feeling blindsided when unknown opposition emerges late in the game that has been left out of the process.



Engagement in action during Community Conversations in Southeast Michigan. Photo by Chris Nowak, Michigan Fitness Foundation

Public involvement is only one piece of the equation, and one pilot program or grant certainly isn't going to transform your partnerships or get everyone in your community on the same page overnight, but it can be a great way to try your own sort of controlled experiment about what kind of collaborations might work for you, demonstrate the value you provide and begin to improve the landscape of partners you can rely on while bringing some joy into the process.

The benefits of building communities with arts and culture

Anyone who has had to build support for a large-scale public works project knows how challenging it is to balance the goals for the project, the vision of those behind the scenes, and the aspirations of the community. A dash of arts, culture and creativity can ease tension in this process and unite diverse stakeholders around shared values, common goals and community treasures. "It's like cooking," says Jack Becker, Executive Director of Forecast Public Art, "you have to throw in some flavor to get a good outcome."

There's a range of potential benefits, and communities that are trying arts-based strategies are seeing a range of desirable outcomes.

The end result is better projects and better places. Engaging the public through the arts and culture helps produce better projects and is part of building better places that are loved and cared for by a wider community of people.

Better highlight and reflect the things that make your community special. The final product of a creative placemaking process will be unique to your community. Whether it is a multi-million dollar bridge, a day-long street festival, a picture book or a list of community comments, creative placemaking allows communities to write their own perspectives and histories and establish their own unique legacies.

Translate values and vision into measurable, achievable objectives. Towns, suburbs, cities, regions and states can benefit from creative placemaking as agencies develop, adopt and implement complex policies to prioritize projects and measure success. This is a conversation that community members should lead, and arts and culture provide tools to translate peoples' values and visions into ideas for future transportation projects and surrounding investments.

Use art to illuminate the planning process. Transportation planning can be difficult enough to understand, much less be the forum of robust dialogue and constructive debate among community members. Too often, people are unintentionally confused, overwhelmed by or left out of planning decisions. Using art as a medium to discuss planning helps foster rich dialogue about the community's concerns, ideas and support for transportation and/or development projects in ways that are more relatable and meaningful to the average person.

Leave a legacy of active community participation. Creative placemaking strategies should foment an ongoing dialogue about community and transportation plans. While many people with limited time and means may be hard-pressed to attend planning meetings, creative placemaking can be done at the community's discretion. Creative placemaking gives people the freedom to offer input in their own words and on their own time.

Use creative expression to break barriers. Art is a catalytic aid for people to tap into and express their concerns and ideas to improve each of these factors by securing a transportation system and development pattern that works for them. Art can also ease tensions between people, which can be important when dealing with the inequalities of an imperfect transportation system.

Engage traditionally underserved communities. Most traditional community engagement practices still lack the ability to mobilize community members to build sufficient support for healthy, equitable transportation projects at a large scale. Creative placemaking has the power to energize vulnerable populations with a sense of independence and ownership that traditional methods sometimes fail to achieve.

Bring some fun into your hard work. The arts inspire us. Creative placemaking is inviting and exciting, and its essence may spur the cognitive abilities needed to tackle hard challenges that require collaborative and focused problem-solving. As an effect, creative placemaking may strengthen the social bonds and group cohesion needed to tackle complex problems – like public transportation, multi-use development and complete streets – collaboratively. Furthermore, creative placemaking forces people to think about a challenge in a new way, eliciting perspectives and thoughts they might not have arrived at without the power of social practice and socially created art.

Grant funding can help strengthen your efforts

There are a few resources available to help you get started with creative placemaking, often available to be matched with local dollars.

Most of the projects that we feature were made possible thanks to a broad movement by national and local funders to support local experiments to incorporate arts and culture in community revitalization.

For the past five years, the National Endowment for the Arts and its partners have been building support for creative placemaking in America. After publishing a foundational report on the topic, the NEA has invested over \$21 million in communities in all 50 states and Puerto Rico through the Our Town grant program.¹² In addition, they are building knowledge of the topic across different sectors through grants and convenings, and have established many partnerships with other federal agencies working on community development issues.

In addition, the former chairman of the NEA, along with leadership of 13 foundations, established a new funders collaborative called ArtPlace America, which has invested in 227 creative placemaking projects across 152 communities of all sizes in 43 states and the District of Columbia since 2011 through its National Grants Program.³

Among those participating in the the ArtPlace AmericaArt funding collaborative, the Kresge Foundation also funds additional creative placemaking activities, including those that test the integration of arts and culture within other sectors.⁴ Projects that we highlight in Portland, Nashville, San Diego and Detroit in this primer

1 <http://arts.gov/publications/creative-placemaking>

2 <http://arts.gov/national/our-town>

3 www.artplaceamerica.org/

4 <http://kresge.org/programs/arts-culture>

were made possible with Kresge support. The Kresge Foundation invests in communities using a guiding set of creative placemaking characteristics:¹

- Embed arts and culture in larger community revitalization initiatives
- Engage in cross-discipline, cross-sector activities
- Exhibit strong leadership
- Advance a shared community vision
- Extend benefits to all stakeholders, especially low-income community members
- Demonstrate commitment to sustained engagement and participation of all residents
- Work to ensure current residents can remain in their community even where revitalization changes neighborhood economics
- Honor community distinctiveness

For more information about funding and financing creative placemaking:

The Kresge Foundation Arts and Culture program overview

<http://kresge.org/programs/arts-culture>

Project for Public Spaces primer on funding sources for public art

<http://www.pps.org/reference/artfunding/>

Americans for the Arts overview on percentage for arts programs

http://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2013/by_program/networks_and_councils/public_art_network/PublicArtAdvocacy_talkpnts.pdf

Forecast Public Art funding and budgeting information in their Public Art Toolkit

<http://forecastpublicart.org/toolkit/tools/budget.html>

¹ <http://kresge.org/sites/default/files/Kresge-Arts-Culture-brochure.pdf>

CREATIVE PLACEMAKING IN PRACTICE

Creative placemaking, though only recently becoming more familiar as an approach, has already shown exciting results in regions as diverse as the Twin Cities, Los Angeles and Nashville. While new and “cutting edge” in some ways, it’s a logical extension of how regions already practice community engagement and participatory design strategies.

We can see the evolution of this approach, and the potential benefits from it, in the recent experience of Minneapolis-St. Paul, a story we explore in detail in the first of two longer case studies included with this guidebook.

In the early 2000s, Minneapolis saw construction of its first light rail line, now called the Blue Line, following a planning and development process that reminded many residents of the detached and disruptive era of freeway-building in the 1950s and 60s. While the line benefited from a comprehensive public art process resulting in unique station designs that reflected local histories, that uniqueness and community participation seemed to end at the station. Neighborhood critics were disappointed by what they saw as a top-down, planner- and engineer-driven process.

The region took note and followed a very different approach in building the recently opened Green Line connecting Minneapolis to downtown St. Paul. Vowing to be neither top-down nor laissez-faire about what kind of “transit-oriented development” and other changes would occur, city leaders and planners brought together area residents, business owners, neighborhood development associations, support organizations and philanthropies well ahead of groundbreaking. Their goal was community-led transformation that would help existing businesses thrive through and beyond construction, create new economic opportunities for residents and preserve the neighborhoods’ unique cultural characteristics and institutions.

Civic groups held visioning sessions to determine what the community wanted to see. Creative events helped businesses stay afloat during construction. Community organizers helped ensure the line would serve all communities, and local government worked closely with local artists to develop robust civic arts programming at the opening. Not only was the line built without the acrimony and negative outcomes of previous projects, but dozens of artists and community collaborators also participated in hundreds of projects large and small that have left a powerful civic legacy.



A temporary video art installation as part of the University Avenue Project, which posted pictures up and down the street prior to Green Line construction. Flickr photo by Michael Hicks. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/mulad/12245840956>

This emerging approach of creative placemaking offers a chance to take advantage of these kinds of transformative investments and the associated planning processes to engage, elevate and empower affected communities.

WHAT MAKES CREATIVE PLACEMAKING DIFFERENT?

Art in transportation is not new, and for many the first thing that comes to mind when you put “art” and “transportation” in the same sentence is public art installations in plazas, station areas or public rights of way. Public art that is spearheaded by community members or led in close collaboration with them is one type of creative placemaking, but there are others, too.

Many agencies have programs to incorporate art installations into large public works projects. Often, this will involve a small number of professionals or an arts board commissioning work from a career artist for a selected and vetted site, using a nominal percentage of the project’s construction budget.

So what makes the creative placemaking process different from public art?

Partnerships are key. Creative placemaking is a process developed through mutually beneficial partnerships between local government, members of the community and artists. An “artist” could also be anyone from a career professional to a community leader who sings in the shower.

Art is not the only goal, or may not be the goal at all. The goal for many traditional public art programs is to develop a permanent or rotating installation to beautify particular sites. Creative placemaking taps arts and culture as a medium to achieve any number of goals. The process may include permanent art works or temporary installations, events or activities. For example, in response to local demand for safer streets and more green space, an artist might work with a group of community members to develop beautiful renderings of a new park surrounded by complete streets infrastructure. The artistic renderings are not an end but a means to encouraging new infrastructure.

Process can matter as much as the product(s). Expanding on the hypothetical example above, the renderings are one product, but a meeting where the renderings are showcased is another, while yet another may be the meeting in which the artist developed the renderings and attracted new community support.

The community comes first. Creative placemaking differs from most mainstream traditional art in that partners work towards a vision or goal that is led by the community, rather than the vision of an artist. Because of this, not all artists are a good fit. Think about artists like doctors; there are both specialists and general practitioners, and it is ideal to work with a general practitioner who will customize their approach to your place.

It is an iterative process. Creative placemaking places artistic practices and local cultures at the nexus of helping communities create better places. Like most of the time when you’re trying to solve a problem, meet a

goal or do something new, it is non-linear and subject to change. While securing an artist in a traditional public art RFP process is relatively cut and dry, creative placemaking partners do a lot of brainstorming, testing and learning along the way. Because of this, it's important to start small and assess risks.

WHERE DID CREATIVE PLACEMAKING COME FROM?

Creative placemaking has evolved from placemaking concepts that emerged in the 1960s, at a time when urban renewal, freeways, parking lots and cookie-cutter development were producing a public realm that many found unappealing.

Visionaries like Jane Jacobs and William H. Whyte promoted ideas about designing more people-centered cities with lively neighborhoods and inviting public spaces.^{1,2} This traditional take on placemaking aimed to create plazas, parks, streets, waterfronts and other spaces that people use and cherish because they have their own identity, reflecting the unique features of the community and location. As both a process and an urban design philosophy, the placemaking concept relies heavily on community participation in the planning, design, management and programming of public spaces.

These early concepts of placemaking helped usher in a continuum of more community- and people-centered practice.

Context Sensitive Solutions (also called Context Sensitive Design): “In the past, transportation projects were typically developed by technical experts and presented to the public once many decisions had already been made,” the Federal Highways Administration acknowledged in introducing its take on CSS in 2010.³ “With this [new] approach, interdisciplinary teams work with public and agency stakeholders to tailor solutions to the setting; preserve scenic, aesthetic, historic and environmental resources; and maintain safety and mobility. The goal of FHWA’s CSS program is to deliver a program of transportation projects that is responsive to the unique character of the communities it serves.”

Complete streets policies at the local and state levels arise from a similar impulse. In adopting a complete streets policy, communities direct their transportation planners and engineers, as a matter of routine, “to design and operate the entire right of way to enable safe access for all users, regardless of age, ability or mode of transportation.”⁴ Determining the needs of all the users of a road in order to design or rebuild for them necessarily leads to a higher level of community engagement than planning only for vehicle traffic. Learn more about complete streets from Smart Growth America and the National Complete Streets Coalition: www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets



One of many useful resources produced by Smart Growth America on complete streets.

1 www.pps.org/reference/jjacobs-2

2 www.pps.org/reference/wwhyte

3 www.fhwa.dot.gov/planning/csstp/

4 www.smartgrowthamerica.org/complete-streets/complete-streets-fundamentals/complete-streets-faq

The recent **Urban Street Design Guide** from the National Association of City Transportation Officials is another groundbreaking effort to offer more design options that can respond to community input.¹ The guide goes beyond thinking only about the transportation function of streets to incorporate arts, culture and recreation, as the authors note in a preface. “Over the coming century ... growing urban populations will demand that their streets serve not only as corridors for the conveyance of people, goods and services, but as front yards, parks, playgrounds and public spaces. Streets must accommodate an ever-expanding set of needs.”



An example of recommended lane widths from the NACTO Urban Street Design Guide.

These approaches are not merely predecessors to the concept of creative placemaking or stops along a continuum to where we are now, but they do share the same heritage of people-first planning and represent major steps forward. They are part of an evolution in transportation thinking that considers not only the individual physical context, but also the local ideas, expertise and cultural treasures that define a place.

Creative placemaking, however, emphasizes the role of artists, arts and culture organizations in the placemaking process. It takes the human-centric, comprehensive and locally informed philosophy and invites artists and arts organizations to join their neighbors in shaping communities' futures.

This in part draws on a long history of “community arts” or “community based arts”, which refers to community members coming together to engage in artistic activity, with or without professional artists or actors, especially — but by no means exclusively — as a means of discovering and honoring the needs and desires of affected low-income neighborhoods and communities of color. In community arts practice, these processes act as a catalyst to trigger events or changes within a community.

¹ <http://nacto.org/usdg/>

HOW DO I DO IT? GETTING STARTED

The second half of this primer consists of a more detailed look at nine opportunity areas where you can partner with the arts, creativity and culture on transportation projects. Before we get there, here are three short tips to help you get started, figure out where to begin looking for opportunities and provide some preliminary steps to consider.

- Identify your opportunity
- Identify your partners and begin communicating with them
- Show and measure your work

Identify your opportunity

First, you need to have some sort of change that you want to see, whether it is community-wide, within a transit overlay or a single station stop or street corner. This could be a challenge that you are trying to solve or prevent, or an opportunity that you are trying to seize. We've seen creative placemaking strategies contribute to areas such as:

- **Design:** Improving street corners and station areas. Connecting neighborhoods.
- **Public relations:** Gaining community support. Attracting positive press.
- **Community identity:** Improving the appeal of a community. Supporting and harmonizing diverse local demands.
- **Leadership:** Bringing reluctant leaders on board with the same goals. Overcoming resistance to change.
- **Economic growth:** Supporting local businesses. Achieving a diverse mix of uses. Branding neighborhoods and corridors. Protecting important local destinations and attracting new ones.
- **Bureaucracy:** Managing risk aversion. Contributing new ideas.
- **Engineering:** Gaining information that traditional tools might miss to improve project design and related improvements. Improving material efficiencies.
- **Social issues:** Supporting community needs. Overcoming distrust. Improving civic support. Building community capacity. Improving overall local image.

Identify your partners and begin communicating

From here, you can ask how artists, arts organizations or arts activities can help achieve the desired change that has been articulated. This is when the “creative” comes into play. You'll want strong community partners who can ascertain local circumstances and go places that you can't.

One of the more common models that we have seen is community-based organizations tapping artists and arts activities to improve their ability to engage constituents, develop community-led visions, elicit unique concerns about and solutions to transportation/development plans, and ensure stronger grassroots coalitions that can better partner with local government in determining the future of their neighborhoods. Your local arts advisory

council is a good place to start identifying partners. Once you have collaborators, communicate, communicate, communicate. Figure out who can do what. Test, iterate, troubleshoot, revise. And track your work as you go.

Show your work

Finally, you need to have a way to know whether you have succeeded. Unfortunately, so much about creative placemaking is process-oriented and qualitative, which makes a uniform guide for measuring success a challenge. There's no standard way of evaluating a creative placemaking approach, since it will be unique to you. ArtPlace America notes, "we simply say it is important to know when you can stop doing something, cross it off your list, and move on to the next thing." Nonetheless, there are myriad ways to identify and measure "success," with many of them depending on goals and aspirations unique to the circumstance.

Because many of our partners value project evaluation, we've included an overview of potential approaches to measurement in a short supplemental appendix at the end of this document.

Painting a crosswalk in Mount Pleasant, Michigan. Flickr photo by anneheathen. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/annethelibrarian/14866121011>



PART II: OPPORTUNITY AREAS TO PARTNER WITH ARTS, CULTURE AND CREATIVITY

Master cultural planning

Consult locals on cultural planning efforts and improve your appeal

Identify the community's assets and strengths

Support the values of the community by mapping cultural assets

Integrate the arts into design, construction and engineering

Let art and artists permeate and inspire your work

Marketing to cultivate ownership and pride

Build support by developing culturally informed projects that leverage what makes you unique

Leveraging cultural districts and corridors

Define cultural corridors, districts, and paths to improve the journey

Mobilize the community to achieve your shared goals

Activate with the arts to promote shared goals and build consensus

Develop local leadership and capacity

Support community-led visions and let the community work for you

Organize events and activities

Arts and culture-driven events can build buzz while building understanding

Incorporate arts in public and advisory meetings

Bring in fresh energy, ensure culture has a seat at the table and spur creative processes

INTRODUCTION TO THESE APPROACHES

A great place relies on good infrastructure combined with a meaningful mix of programming, public spaces diverse economic opportunity – for the people who then inhabit and bring them to life. The nine strategies in this section represent proven avenues to improve partnerships while better knitting together all of the above.

Through tapping into the social networks built around arts and culture you can earn the trust of your community, and by identifying sites of cultural significance you can be mindful and inclusive of them in planning infrastructure and redevelopment projects. Engaging the public in this creative way, as the many examples in this section will illustrate, helps build trust and valuable relationships between public agencies and residents. That trust and engagement is vital for building support for future transportation investments or attempting to raise new money to support ambitious plans.

“Culture-based revitalization aims for a narrow target; it must stimulate economic vitality and promote opportunity without generating displacement or expanding inequality.”

Researchers Mark Stein and Susan Seifert, who both head up the Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) at the University of Pennsylvania, explain the power of social currency to amplify the very real economic assets required to build and invest in places:¹

Culture is the right tool for urban revival because it flourishes in the new urban reality of the 21st century. The arts are no longer just about going to the symphony, the ballet or a Broadway musical. They are more active, more accessible and more polyglot. Artists have become social entrepreneurs, selling their wares as well as their vision. They draw on the variety of the world’s traditions as well as the distinctive and diverse rhythms of the contemporary city.

While the arts are commerce, they revitalize cities not through their bottom-line but through their social role. The arts build ties that bind—neighbor-to-neighbor and community-to-community. It is these social networks that translate cultural vitality into economic dynamism.

You’ll notice a lot of overlap among the approaches and real world examples used to illustrate each one – many projects incorporate more than just one, there are also more approaches than we list here and this resource itself is just a sample. The best solution may be one that you come up with based on your own unique features, partnerships and needs.

There are a number of approaches to tapping your community’s unique sites and networks of arts and culture in order to strengthen the appeal of your projects and surrounding development. And all of these approaches can help you build a stronger network of support or advance a critical infrastructure project. If you are interested in knowing more about the physical sites, mapping is a good start. If you’re more interested in the story of a local

1 <http://www.giarts.org/sites/default/files/Cultivating-Natural-Cultural-Districts.pdf>

site, personal interviews can illuminate. More important than the number of responses or data points that you can generate is to have significant representation from the community in question, which you can achieve either through casting a wide net or developing strategic partnerships.

This is not a linear list, nor is it the total of what's possible for you and your region or community.

The right approach for you will depend on who you choose to work with and what strengths those partners bring to the table. A good first step is to pick up the phone and call your local arts council. For more information about working with local partners, visit the Understanding Community section of the NEA's Ourtown Portal: <https://www.arts.gov/exploring-our-town/project-process/understanding-community>

Development without displacement

The wave of economic development that transportation investments so often bring is generally good news for city coffers and the results are often positive. But rapid investment and change can threaten the character of what makes a place appealing in the first place. In some places, a rise in artists or “hipsters” can signal to residents that rents will also go up. Or government-led efforts to attract a more “creative class” can feel like a boot out for people who don't meet Richard Florida's definition.¹

Each may or may not precede development that displaces residents and businesses. In these cases, close collaboration with community partners is more likely to ensure an end product that everyone will like. That's why the creative placemaking approach focuses on including a wide net of partners. It is no silver bullet, and as scholars Mark Stern and Susan Seifert put it, “Culture-based revitalization aims for a narrow target; it must stimulate economic vitality and promote opportunity without generating displacement or expanding inequality.” The more buy-in you have, the more likely you are to wind up with an approach that everyone can champion. Mapping a community's existing assets, effectively engaging the community, and developing strong partnerships are all ways to secure that buy-in, alongside developing corresponding policy responses based on what you learn.

Avoiding displacement by building in affordable spaces for arts and culture

“You want to have appealing places for people to live, work and play,” says Amanda Thompson, Knight Foundation program officer and former planning director for Decatur, GA. “But what we saw in Decatur was that as development occurs it becomes harder to have that ‘play’ part. You'll have a huge influx of bars and restaurants and it quickly becomes ‘live, work and eat.’ The arts, culture and entertainment venues can't survive, and so those personalized experiences start to move out.”



A welcoming space in a parklet in Vancouver, British Columbia. Flickr photo by Paul Krueger. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/pwkrueger/7563944478>

¹ www.creativeclass.com/richard_florida

While you may not be able to replace units or venues one for one, you can plan and program welcoming spaces. “Beyond a plaza, I encourage thinking about how to allow the most arts to flourish here as possible, the most affordable housing, the most opportunities for artists to work here, and for artists to engage. It will look different than before, but hopefully you will achieve more than before”.

Thompson suggests that planners and engineers program spaces with an eye for inclusion to avoid displacing arts and culture as a neighborhood changes, grows or develops. “Think about what exists to allow people to just do their thing: a graffiti wall, a little podium, outlets for people who may want to plug in,” she says. Such infrastructure additions can come at little cost and create a much more flexible space.

Local needs require local solutions

Local leaders have come to understand that cultural attractions are an essential ingredient for complete communities in the same vein as natural space, libraries and recreational facilities. But unlike, say, libraries, destinations for culture and the arts come in countless “flavors” so approaches will depend on the circumstance.

Like in Saint Paul, where community groups from the Victoria neighborhood preserved a local theater through partnership with a local land trust and the city (read more in the Twin Cities case study). Unless you’re working with a large attraction or scale, this is an iterative process. We liken it to the difference between investing in a major league sports stadium and a community park: it’s easier to find templates to “go big” and create a new destination, but custom and small-scale solutions have their own benefits. If your circumstances are favorable, you may consider tax breaks, easements, regulatory reform, land trusts or grants.

For more information about anti-displacement resources and strategies:

PolicyLink’s newly released Equitable Development Toolkit includes 27 tools to reverse patterns of segregation and disinvestment, prevent displacement, and promote equitable revitalization.

<http://www.policylink.org/equity-tools/equitable-development-toolkit/about-toolkit>

A policy brief by the Citizen’s Housing and Planning Association, Making Inclusionary Housing More Flexible: Four Ideas for Urban Settings, outlines how four communities have incentivized inclusionary housing while at the same time promoting mixed-income neighborhoods.

<https://www.chapa.org/housing-policy/research-reports/making-inclusionary-housing-more-flexible-four-ideas-urban-settings>

Enterprise is a social enterprise that “brings together the people and funds to create affordable housing in strong neighborhoods” through lending funds, financing development, managing and building affordable housing. Visit Brookings’ Confronting Suburban Poverty Case Studies to read about Enterprise’s partnership with the city and county of Denver’s Offices of Strategic Partnerships and Economic Development to launch the groundbreaking Denver Transit-Oriented Development (TOD) Fund. The \$15 million fund has leveraged nearly \$200 million from public, private, and nonprofit partners to preserve or create 626 affordable homes near FasTracks transit, alongside 120,000 square feet of mixed-use commercial space around the sites, making room for a new public library, child care program, and dance company, as well as affordable office space for local

nonprofit organizations.

<http://www.enterprisecommunity.com/>

<http://confrontingsuburbanpoverty.org/case-studies/>

Community-Wealth.org, a project of The Democracy Collaborative, is a resource for tools, models, and support organizations for a broad range of community wealth building activities, from community land trusts to municipal enterprises to new state and local policies.

<http://community-wealth.org/>

MASTER CULTURAL PLANNING

Consult locals on cultural planning efforts and improve your appeal

Communities around the country are beginning to place arts and culture alongside more traditional disciplines like housing and economic development while undertaking the challenges of rebuilding and reinvigorating neighborhoods. Cultural planning is an established practice in Canada that has caught on more recently in the U.S., as noted by the American Planning Association.¹

Americans for the Arts defines cultural planning as, “community-wide process of creating a vision for cultural programming and development.” According to Americans for the Arts, there are several types of plans:²

- **Comprehensive detailed cultural plan:** A community-wide plan based on broadly defined understanding of culture with integrated goals compiled through community consultation.
- **Cultural plan with a single discipline focus:** Community-wide plan with a specific focus, for example on the arts sector alone or a focus on the visual arts, etc.
- **Community cultural assessment or cultural mapping:** A comprehensive identification and analysis of a community’s cultural resources and needs gathered through a broadly based consultative/collaborative process. It is a critical early phase of any cultural planning process.
- **Cultural plan with a project-specific focus:** Examples include an economic impact study, a feasibility study for fundraising campaign, a feasibility study for a facility, a cultural district study or a cultural tourism study. It is a critical early phase of any cultural planning process.
- **Cultural component of municipal or regional general plan:** Arts and/or heritage and/or culture are integrated vertically as one part of a city or master plan, e.g., a section or chapter of the plan is dedicated to arts, culture, heritage, etc.

Developing any type of cultural plan in consultation with community members helps you create or enhance a reputation as an appealing and prosperous destination. A cultural plan starts with mapping a community’s cultural and creative assets, which we detail in the next section.

Who does it: Metropolitan planning organizations or local municipalities can develop cultural plans in consultation with local arts organizations and community groups. Local organizations can also spearhead small-scale plans and projects to feed into these efforts.

The role of arts and culture: Local arts and culture partners are important to identify and partner with on these efforts.

When to do it: Try developing it alongside your regional plan.

1 www.planning.org/research/arts/briefingpapers/overview.htm

2 www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/culture-and-communities

OPPORTUNITY IN PRACTICE

Flint gains more than a plan through artist-led efforts

Flint, Michigan

When Flint, Michigan set out to develop its first comprehensive plan in 50 years, local leaders wanted to make sure that local arts and culture were represented in the process and the final product. With support from the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) and ArtPlace America, Flint hired nine artists-in-residence for its nine wards to help engage residents in exploring the role arts play in the city's future. The city also invited artists and arts administrators to join the various master plan committees in order to ensure that their perspectives were integrated into each of the master plan areas of focus, including transportation, economic development, health and welfare, and safety. The valuable input provided by these artists and others will guide cultural activities in the city for years to come. And the impact on citizens was immediate. As Greg Fielder, CEO of Flint's Art Council said in a profile from ArtPlace America,

"It is difficult to express the positive cumulative effect of these efforts to those outside of Flint who have no inkling how much local citizens hunger for a boost in their sense of civic pride, relief from the negative stereotypes inflicted on Flint from the outside media and an island of serenity from the often daily difficulties of living in a city at the tail end of a downward spiral. ...From ward to ward, artists and citizens talked with one another, ate with one another, told their personal stories and turned them into plays, wrote poems, cleaned up neighborhoods, re-created a local skate park, created gardens, crafted sculptures from recycled materials, performed in public service announcements, formed drum lines making music together and lit lanterns lighting up the skies over their formerly abandoned public parks."

The project culminated in a free, public event at the Rotunda in Flint City Hall, where the artists delivered a report and demonstrated their work in each of Flint's wards (e.g. slide show, videotapes, poetry readings, scenes from a play, music performed by ward residents, etc.) Read more on the project's NEA profile: <http://arts.gov/exploring-our-town/imagine-flint-master-plan>

TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND TAKE-AWAYS

Inventory assets, gain feedback, and craft a cultural plan

Decatur, GA

Decatur was an early adopter of cultural arts master planning.¹ The city began by conducting an inventory of its creative assets, and then holding focus groups with local citizens to determine what types of arts and culture people prioritized. As a result of responses in those focus groups, the city chose to prioritize emerging artists

¹ www.decaturga.com/index.aspx?page=154

and participatory arts practices, and developed a cultural master plan to shape how it would do so.

Encourage locals to incorporate arts and culture

Chicago, IL

The Chicago Metropolitan Area's Metropolitan Planning Organization, CMAP, offers an Arts and Culture Toolkit. This roadmap is available for municipalities in and beyond Northeastern Illinois to incorporate arts and culture into their communities. The toolkit includes definitions, planning steps, case studies, external resources, and model regulatory language. <http://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/76006/FY14-0006+ARTS+AND+CULTURE+TOOLKIT+lowres.pdf/f276849a-f363-44d4-89e1-8c1f2b11332f>

Related resources

Americans for the Arts offers an overview of cultural planning and how to develop a cultural plan, with links to several examples and case studies.

<http://www.americansforthearts.org/by-topic/culture-and-communities>

The Creative City Network of Canada offers a Cultural Planning Toolkit

– The toolkit includes an adaptable model and practical checklists for charting and tracking progress.

http://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/cultural_planning_toolkit.pdf

IDENTIFY THE COMMUNITY'S ASSETS AND STRENGTHS

Support the values of the community by mapping cultural assets

Identifying the existing arts and cultural assets — whether places, people, artists, groups or institutions — provides local leaders with invaluable opportunities to build powerful relationships in the community that have benefits for everyone involved. And those relationships can help you advance your critical infrastructure projects and help ensure they best meet the community's needs at the same time.

Understanding the significant local assets and networks are a building block of community development, and extending that knowledge to arts and culture is vital. Identifying existing local cultural and creative assets is the first step of, and can feed into a number of cultural-based revitalization efforts, from regional cultural plans to small cultural districts.

Who does it: Local government can measure data about arts nonprofits or level of participation in various activities. Local organizations such as nonprofits, community development associations, and arts groups are also well-suited to develop a more in-depth understanding of local cultural treasures, whether people, places or things. In addition to having more flexibility than the typical public agency, they may offer greater capacity to deepen relationships or develop richer conclusions.

The role of arts and culture: The goal of cultural asset mapping is to identify what is already present in your community. This could range from arts nonprofits and industry sectors to local artists to the best place to get authentic ethnic food to a weekly drum circle.

When to do it: Try bringing in partners to lead this effort for the area where a project is planned but not yet funded.

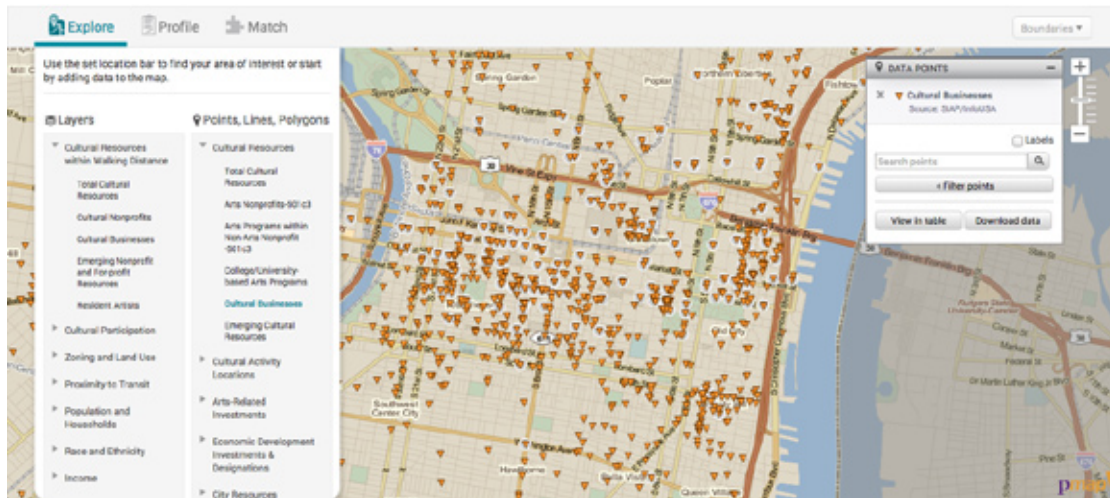
OPPORTUNITY IN PRACTICE

Philadelphia earns prestige mapping its cultural assets

Philadelphia, PA

Cultureblocks¹ is a free online tool developed for the City of Philadelphia that maps nonprofit arts and culture groups, “cultural businesses,” public art, galleries, and cultural events. The benefits are felt by a range of different groups: It allows individuals and organizations to locate activities in their own backyard, while researchers have used the aggregate data to identify trends and compelling conclusions about the role these arts and cultural resources play in stabilizing communities, which has in turn informed how and where the city invests in its neighborhoods.

1 www.cultureblocks.com/wordpress



As Mayor Michael A. Nutter said in a statement accepting a 2015 Harvard University Bright Idea Award on behalf of the project, “CultureBlocks is a tremendous resource for all Philadelphians to keep track of the wealth of arts and culture experiences available. Having this information in one place, easily accessible, allows us to make better, more informed decisions around research, planning and investment in our city’s creative economy.”¹

Read more on the NEA case study: <http://arts.gov/exploring-our-town/culture-blocks>

TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND TAKE-AWAYS

Developing more helpful indicators – local leaders highlight culture along Route 99 *San Joaquin Valley, CA*

While sites of culture can be mapped, it’s still a fairly two-dimensional picture of a region’s assets. Developing a more comprehensive set of indicators can provide a fuller picture about those opportunities, who participates, and a region’s level of overall support. All of these together constitute a region’s “cultural vitality” according to The Urban Institute, which offers a comprehensive toolkit for developing and measuring cultural vitality indicators.² (Chapter 5 on page 40 has recommendations, and chapter 7 on page 57 has examples.) In a case study, the institute shows how leaders in the San Joaquin Valley of California have used cultural indicators to transform segments of Route 99 through freeway improvements and beautification efforts that point people towards arts and culture venues.³

1 <http://creativeph.org/post/111576517854/cultureblocks-harvardashcenter-brightidea>

2 www.urban.org/UploadedPDF/311392_Cultural_Vitality.pdf

3 www.urban.org/projects/cultural-vitality-indicators/caseexample.cfm

Conducting surveys – Montgomery learns what makes its community tick

Montgomery, Ohio

The small town of Montgomery had long emphasized civic engagement through volunteer incentives and other programming designed to build stronger bonds in the community, but they didn't know how to tell if any of it was working. So they set out to learn how to measure local sentiments on civic engagement and track participation – though those tools can be easily adapted to help understand the arts and cultural resources that community members value.

“They approached us without a lot of money, staff or time, wondering what kinds of evaluation would be possible,” said Amanda Thompson, a creative placemaking expert now with the Knight Foundation who also contributed to Decatur, GA’s cultural master plan as city planner for Decatur, Georgia.

Thompson helped officials develop a common working definition of civic engagement, administer focus group surveys in order to better understand how people felt about Montgomery, and identify measurable ways to track levels of community engagement. That process is outlined in a toolkit for The International City/County Manager Association, *Measuring Community Engagement*.¹ Thompson notes that the process can be easily tailored to by substituting “community engagement” with “arts and culture”.

Employing artists – an artist turns citizen-led cultural mapping on its head

Los Angeles County, CA

In light of the significant current and future investments being made by Los Angeles County in the unincorporated south LA community of Willowbrook, the Los Angeles County Arts Commission developed a project to illuminate the neighborhood’s creative potential for planners, designers and policymakers.

The Arts Commission worked with local arts organization LA Commons to produce a community survey and commissioned artist Rosten Woo to produce public engagement activities that as he says, “produced a series of publications, events, and installations designed to make visible what was already there.” The project revealed an expression of unique cultural assets, including resident’s homes, gardens and vehicles that were documented in the well-received book *Willowbrook Is/Es...* The book is a tool to reframe the discussion about Willowbrook, a community perceived, along with the adjacent communities of Watts and Compton, as ground zero for poverty,



Still from artist Rosten Woo's book "Willowbrook Is/Es..." Photo by Alyse Emdur via Los Angeles County Arts Commission.

¹ http://icma.org/en/Article/102049/Measuring_Community_Engagement

gang violence and low educational attainment. It demonstrates that while the statistics may say one thing, Willowbrook, like all communities, is one of complex identities, and distinct and thriving cultural and creative practices.

Proceeds from book sales benefit the local library foundation. The project has become a model project in Los Angeles County, making a case for artist-led projects that help unincorporated communities retain their unique identity and character during substantial planning and community development efforts. Additionally, the project inspired Los Angeles County Supervisor Mark Ridley-Thomas to commission similar books for other unincorporated areas of the region. More about Project Willowbrook can be found here: <http://www.lacountyarts.org/willowbrook>.

Using the process to improve local capacity – activists employ cultural mapping to build relationships, spur healthier communities

California

In an effort to address health issues in some underserved neighborhoods, a private health foundation worked with the Alliance for California Traditional Arts to develop profiles of “cultural treasures” for four communities.¹ Like Philadelphia’s Culture Blocks example above, their methodology resulted in a series of maps of “cultural treasures” on a web portal that also includes information about local services, Healthy City.²

For ACTA, however, the maps were not the only end goal. Rather, understanding the cultural resources that local communities care about was a starting point for developing local relationships and engaging the community on public health issues. The ACTA project team conducted interviews, created videos about local cultural treasures, and organized events to showcase these treasures and engage the community in participatory arts and cultural practices, such as painting, song, and dance, all while weaving in information about the campaigns of the Building Healthy Communities initiative. Amy Kitchener, Executive Director of the Alliance for California Traditional Arts, explains, “When people are being creative, their guard is down and their hearts are open. As a result, they are more open to new ideas and receiving this information.” As a result, hundreds of community members gained new access to health resources while developing positive new associations with their neighbors and leaders of the initiative.



Watch a video of this project here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=vcZE3xJhbwl>

1 www.actaonline.org/content/building-healthy-communities-cultural-treasures

2 <http://healthycity.org>

Charting local histories – TriMet develops a cultural history report to help make relevant art

Portland, OR

The first step taken by The Tri-County Metropolitan Transportation District of Oregon (TriMet) in Portland, OR when planning the public art portion of any new transportation project is to develop a better understanding of the community served by the project. TriMet’s Public Art Program commissions a historian to do research and conduct personal interviews to develop a narrative “cultural history report” of the area and its culture. The report provides important information to staff and advisory committees to consider when determining opportunities and selecting artists. It is also helpful to artists as they develop their site-specific concepts. Now, as a result of a creative placemaking project led by community groups along the planned Powell-Division Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) route, TriMet is in conversations with community groups about taking this practice even further by allowing temporary and citizen-led projects into future public art. (Read more starting on page 47.)

Related resources

The Creative City Network of Canada has a step-by-step cultural mapping toolkit designed to take you through the entire mapping process, from creating an inventory to drawing up and presenting your map. http://www.creativecity.ca/database/files/library/cultural_mapping_toolkit.pdf

INTEGRATE THE ARTS INTO DESIGN, CONSTRUCTION AND ENGINEERING

Let art and artists permeate and inspire your work

Artists can make surprising contributions when they are brought in during the planning of a project, during an update of planning or programming, or even during day-to-day operations.

Who does it: Artists may offer any organization new ideas and approaches to their typical way of doing business. Cities have experimented with embedding artists in their departments of transportation or planning and public works, while transit agencies, many of which have longstanding arts programs, are beginning to experiment with giving locals greater opportunity to participate in beautifying their communities.

The role of arts and culture: Artists can provide fresh approaches and new ways of doing things, discover more efficient use of materials, and provide fresh thinking for existing programs.

When to do it: Try contacting your local arts commission for advice.

OPPORTUNITY IN PRACTICE

Seattle integrates arts and culture across departments

Seattle, WA

Seattle was one of the first cities in the country to pass a public arts ordinance (in 1973) and to make one percent of the budget for any eligible capital project available for the commission, purchase and installation of artworks in a variety of settings.¹ Now, artists not only develop public art plans, but also integrate art into the city department's routine work and infrastructure, while the regional transit agency partners on a suite of arts engagement programs.²

Artist in the DOT

In 2013, Seattle DOT's hired an artist to develop an art plan which "is focused as a plan of action," according to an online introduction, "comprehensively detailing how Seattle can become a national leader in creating a more humane, layered, beautiful and relevant transportation system."³ The introduction continues: "It offers a completely new methodology for rethinking the practicality and use of our shared right-of-way. By employing the work of artists, the creativity of citizens and the ingenuity of SDOT employees, the gradual implementation of this plan will contribute significantly to a Seattle whose streets and sidewalks celebrate life, discovery and creativity." The plan, available in three parts, provides an overview and visual encyclopedia of art in the right-of-

1 www.seattle.gov/arts/publicart/ordinance.asp

2 www.seattle.gov/arts/publicart/art_plans.asp

3 www.seattle.gov/transportation/artplan.htm

way as well as a toolkit for project managers with handy one-page examples of various project types.

Vaughn Bell, while employed as an artist at the Seattle DOT, spoke of her common ground with her colleagues in an interview with Americans for the Arts.¹ “For me, it resides in a fascination with how people experience places. Adding a subtle finish to a concrete wall or an imprint to a sidewalk, on a project which would otherwise be concerned almost entirely with ‘moving goods and people’ through the city, I am hoping that we can create a moment for a higher degree of attention and connection to the place.”

Regional and local programming

Since 1989, Metro Transit in King County has involved youth and other members of the community in designing and painting murals at local stops.² Metro contributes panels and paint, and members of the community donate their artistic talent.



The Architecture of Endlessness designed and painted by NKO, a mural on the Red Wall surrounding the Link Capitol Hill Station. Flickr photo by Sound Transit <https://www.flickr.com/photos/soundtransit/7950801038>

More recently, Metro has expanded the scope and depth of its programming in partnership with King County’s cultural services agency, 4Culture.³ Since 1992, Metro Transit and 4Culture have presented poetry from community members on placards placed above the bus seats. In 2015, the Poetry on Buses program expanded to include poetry workshops in five languages, an online poetry portal, and digital artworks designed for mobile devices meant to be accessed on (and call attention to) the region’s new Wi-Fi-enabled rapid bus service, RapidRide.⁴

Supporting local culture

The City of Seattle also provides grants for facility renovation or new construction to nonprofits that can demonstrate a record of ongoing artistic or cultural accomplishments.⁵

1 <http://blog.americansforthearts.org/2011/04/12/embedded-in-transportation>

2 http://metro.kingcounty.gov/prog/sheltermural/sm_gallery.htm

3 Read more about 4Culture’s programs at www.4culture.org/.

4 <http://poetryonbuses.org/about/>

5 www.seattle.gov/arts/funding/cultural_facilities.asp

TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND TAKE-AWAYS

Solving functional public works challenges with art Custom streets promote safety and pride in Oakland's Chinatown

Oakland, CA

In direct response to a rash of pedestrian fatalities among older Asian residents and recent immigrants, community groups successfully advocated for safety infrastructure in Oakland's Chinatown. The preliminary project proposal incorporated both standard pedestrian safety features and a custom crosswalk design based on the Qing Dynasty Imperial Court.¹ The latter aspect required a significant amount of state DOT and city public works approval, which was well worth the effort as it has become a local source of pride.



Oakland Chinatown's new crosswalks feature high-visibility diagonal crosswalk markings, corner bulb-outs, countdown timers and streetlights for improved safety. Photo by Gregory Tung, Freedman Tung + Sasaki.

Minneapolis public works outsources its design inspiration

Minneapolis, MN

The City of Minneapolis public works department partners with local nonprofit Juxtaposition Arts, a nonprofit arts organization that provides apprenticeship opportunities for high school youth. The apprentices, who train with the University of Minnesota's Design School, craft benches for bus stops, planter boxes for corners and art for public spaces. In so doing, the youth gain practical design and engineering experience while Minneapolis picks up new ideas and approaches. The group is currently working with the City on a pilot program to turn parking spaces into small parks, or "parklets," an approach that has seen success in several cities around the country.²



The Silent Light art installation glows beneath the Brooklyn-Queens Expressway in Fort Greene, Brooklyn. Photos by Urban Matter Inc.

Artistic lighting transforms dark spaces

Brooklyn, NY

Silent Lights is an artistic lighting project conceived by New York City DOT's Urban Arts Program and the Brooklyn Arts Council to turn a dark, loud overpass into a pleasant experience for the pedestrians who must cross under it. Read more from Urban Matter Inc, the studio that designed the project.³

1 www.ftscities.com/Oakland_revive_chinatown_pedestrian_improvements

2 www.minneapolismn.gov/pedestrian/WCMS1P-130301

3 <http://urbanmatterinc.com/silent-lights/>

Embedding artists in the day-to-day – St. Paul’s poetry program

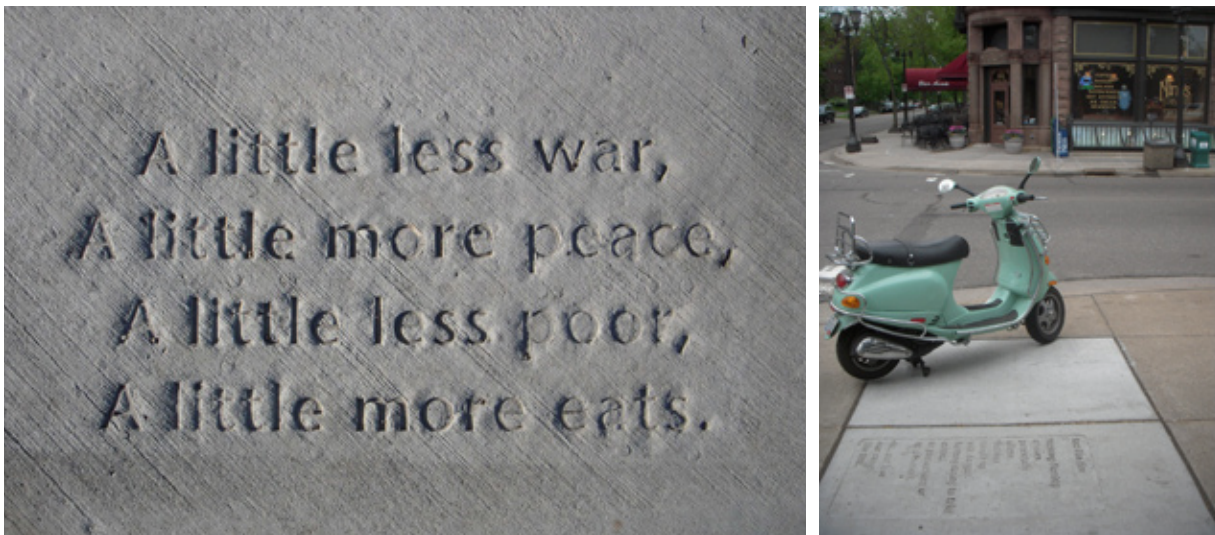
St. Paul, MN

Forecast Public Art Director Jack Becker says the key to harnessing art and creative processes is to embed artists into the decision-making process.

This is exactly what the City of St. Paul, Minnesota did in their planning and economic development department in the 1980’s. Matching department consulting funds dollar-for-dollar with a now-defunct NEA grant program, the city provided \$10,000 to three artists to join the planning, economic development and public works departments for three months. The city provided the artists with a desk, a phone and exposure to how the departments worked.

In the first month, the artists learned day-to-day processes and got to know their peers. In the second month, they looked at projects to make suggestions (e.g., repurposing materials from a previous work site to construct a railing for a new bridge). And for their last month, artists provided recommendations (e.g., commissioning a welder to build that railing). The fresh energy and new ideas introduced by the artists were received so well that St. Paul continues to fund an artist-in-residency in its public works department. Its successful spin-offs include a now standalone program to embed lines of poetry into new sidewalk tiles.¹

“You can give an artist a plot of land, or you can give them your entire city as a canvas,” Jack says. He acknowledges that the latter is not without risk because the final results are less predictable, which is why regular communication is key, and temporary installations or pilot projects can be a good first step.



Sidewalk poetry written into the concrete in St. Paul, MN. Both photos by Public Art Saint Paul. Everyday Poems for City Sidewalk is a project of City Artist in Residence Marcus Young in partnership with the City of Saint Paul Public Works Department and Public Art Saint Paul.

¹ www.stpaul.gov/index.aspx?NID=2820

MARKETING TO CULTIVATE OWNERSHIP AND PRIDE

Build support by developing culturally informed projects that leverage what makes you unique

If the first question for developing any project is “What are we doing and why?” the first question for tapping local culture could be, “How can the distinctiveness of this place and the people in it contribute to the success of what we’re doing?” Developing projects in a way that incorporates, nods to, and supports local icons, ethnic identities and institutions can bolster public support for projects.

Who can do it: Local units of government can draw upon significant local landmarks or features in the built environment to help create an exciting rallying point for a project, and community members can inform or lead the identification of these significant unique features.

The role of arts and culture: Artists can help with the marketing efforts or local cultural organizations may have ideas for this work.

When to do it: Try when you have a project in mind, but have not yet rolled it out publicly.

OPPORTUNITY IN PRACTICE

The humanities help Dallas chart its redevelopment future

Dallas, TX

When Dallas restored its historic Main Street in 1994, the concept that would become the focal point for its revitalization did not come from a planner’s desk, nor did it come at the insistence of an elected official. Instead, it emerged from scholars and artists who were fixated on a mythical flying horse.

The faded Pegasus statue atop the Magnolia Oil building had long served as a focal point for folks coming into Dallas. But over the decades, the statue lost its luster just as the downtown had lost ground and appeal over decades of suburban development. As the city, like many others, faced the prospect of revitalizing its downtown, there wasn’t a lot of pride around it – or the statue. The Dallas Institute for Humanities and Culture, a local organization that aims to “enrich and deepen the practical life of the city with the founding knowledge of the humanities,” took note of the mythology of Pegasus, who the Gods struck down to earth so that the waters of imagination might spring forth from where his hooves touched the ground. They saw the potential for this idea to characterize the personality of Dallas as a whole and inspire redevelopment efforts.



The Pegasus atop the Magnolia Oil building in Dallas. Flickr photo by Thomas Hawk. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/thomashawk/22184771629>

When discussions about revitalization of downtown began, then-head of the Dallas Institute, Gail Thomas, quickly won leaders over on the idea of branding around the Pegasus. The flagship project for downtown revitalization became Pegasus Plaza, a public park in the downtown with design roots in Greek mythology that hosts concerts and festivals. The Pegasus remained a central symbol through the 1990s as private funders raised \$600,000 to build a new neon flying horse sign in the downtown. On New Year's Eve 1999, the new Pegasus flew once again above the Dallas skyline and more than 40,000 came out to witness the relighting of the icon. Years later, this new focal point of community pride helped provide public support for an iconic bridge that nods to the wings of Pegasus designed by famous architect Santiago Calatrava, despite cost overruns associated with the project.



Pegasus Plaza, which sits in downtown Dallas under the Pegasus statue. Plaza and photo by Brad J. Goldberg. <http://www.bradjgoldberg.com/project/pegasus-plaza/>

Now Thomas charts the city's proverbial ascent full-time, leading the nonprofit Trinity Trust to raise private funds to match city redevelopment dollars. In a conference about the future of the city, Mayor Mike Rawlings thanked the Dallas Institute for the value they have contributed to the city, noting, "As we move into the 21st century we need to make sure that we're a city of ideas and a city that attracts individuals that are thinkers and innovators."

TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND TAKE-AWAYS

In some cases, the features that define a place as culturally distinct derive from demography, as in a traditionally ethnic neighborhood. But there are many other ways to express a local identity. Consider these examples:

Icons

In the Dallas example above, the red flying Pegasus sign became an icon for the downtown's regeneration. The city has successfully branded many of its redevelopment efforts with this symbol.

Institutions

In Miami, the Arscht Art Center is a treasured resource. The city is working to improve access to this resource through a signature bridge. For more information about this project, read its NEA profile: <http://arts.gov/national/our-town/grantee/2014/performing-arts-center-trust-inc-aka-adrienne-arscht-center-performing>

History

In Oakland's Chinatown, an elaborate crosswalk nodding to Chinese heritage has not only improved safety after a pedestrian fatality but has attracted positive attention. See page 33. The second approach in this section, Cultural Asset Mapping, is a good way to develop a better understanding of local priorities. Find out more on page 26.

Bolstering local culture with infrastructure investments **A set of statues signal and protect the nation's Puerto Rican enclave**

Chicago, IL

Chicago has long had a Puerto Rican population, but it was only in the last 20 years that the community found a more permanent home within the city. In the 1970's and 1980's, Puerto Rican residents were displaced from a series of neighborhoods by an influx of affluent whites, moving from Lincoln Park to Wicker Park to West Town. In the 1990's, community leaders feared another wave coming to West Town and came together to do something about it. A coalition of more than 80 Puerto Rican community organizations and business leaders formulated a master plan to prevent another wave of displacement by using the political and economic tools of development to their advantage.

The group decided to focus on a mile-long stretch along Division Street between Western Avenue and Mozart Avenue where just over half of the buildings were owned by Puerto Ricans and other Latinos. Their goal was to further concentrate Puerto Rican-owned businesses in the area, expand affordable housing, and protect businesses and residents alike from being displaced through rising rents and property taxes.

Having organized and established more political representation than Puerto Ricans had in the past, local leaders gained support from the City of Chicago for their efforts to establish a Puerto Rican enclave that came to be known as "Paseo Boricua" (loosely translated as "Puerto Rican Promenade"). In 1995, the city solidified this support with a gift that is now the neighborhood's hallmark feature: two 59-foot, steel Puerto Rican flag sculptures, crossing Division Street at either end of the commercial strip.

The flags established an identity for the corridor and also physically helped to claim the space as Puerto Rican. The flags were part of a series of city initiatives in the neighborhood (of Humboldt Park) providing matching funds to improve business façades to resemble Old San Juan colonial buildings; enabling tax-increment financing as a redevelopment tool; and attracting developers and local financing to match programs such as Low Income Housing Tax Credit, HOME and Community Development Block Grants to build over one hundred units of affordable housing. Local leaders say the flag statues played a critical role in establishing Paseo Boricua as the central economic, cultural and political focal point for the community.

"Business sales have increased 30 percent in Paseo Boricua since the flags were unveiled," wrote scholar Nilda Flores-Gonzalez in 2001 research.¹ In the first year after the flags were installed, 16 new businesses opened, and by the end of the decade the corridor boasted more than 90 businesses and organizations.

1 [http://centropur.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/Journal/1999-2002/Vol_13_2_2001_fall/2.NFlores.PaseoBoricua\(pgs6-23\).pdf](http://centropur.hunter.cuny.edu/sites/default/files/Journal/1999-2002/Vol_13_2_2001_fall/2.NFlores.PaseoBoricua(pgs6-23).pdf)



A parade passes under a statue of a Puerto Rican flag in the Paseo Boricua neighborhood of Chicago. The city gifted a matching pair of flag statues to the Puerto Rican neighborhood in 1995. Flickr photo by Emily. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ebarney/2578770769>

Two decades later, the flags continue to protect. Though the adjacent neighborhoods have changed dramatically, rents have increased nearby, and Puerto Rican businesses have been displaced around the corridor, the stretch of Paseo Boricua between the statues still serves as the community's understood focal point, boasting a variety of distinctly Puerto Rican businesses, multiple affordable housing units, nonprofits and political offices that serve Puerto Rican constituencies. Now, community groups are fundraising to construct a new local cultural hub that will include 15 live/work apartment for artists and their families, retail space, a multi-media theater, a 3,000-square-foot gallery and a piano lounge.¹

¹ www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20150223/humboldt-park/paseo-boricua-arts-center-with-artist-housing-unveiled-humboldt-park

LEVERAGING CULTURAL DISTRICTS AND CORRIDORS

Define cultural corridors, districts and paths to improve the journey

A cultural district is a labeled area of a city in which a high concentration of cultural facilities and programs serve as the main anchor of attraction and are marketed together. This is one of the most common approaches that communities take for leveraging arts and culture.

At least 90 cities have established cultural districts (otherwise known as arts districts) in the last 20 years. Some have succeeded more than others, and the strongest districts emerge from long-term collaboration with local partners. More recently, communities have experimented with smaller-scale “cultural corridors” along transit, bike or pedestrian rights of way, or even smaller “cultural paths” such as a shortcut or bike path featuring art installations.

Who can do it: Many cities already have the beginnings of neighborhood-based cultural clusters that have emerged without planning or massive public investment, and the strongest large-scale districts tend to build on these efforts.

The role of arts and culture: Cultural destinations can serve as an anchor. Artists or artists in partnership with community members can help improve the shape and scope of these projects.

When to do it: Once you have identified a cluster of community members or institutions that would like to develop a district.

Expert resources on cultural districts

The Americans for the Arts National Cultural District Exchange

This exchange offers a “one-stop shop” on cultural districts, from learning about different types to making one a reality in your community.¹ We recommend starting with their cultural district basics page and checking out the video of Mayor Stephanie Rawlings-Blake of Baltimore, Maryland talking about the success the city has seen in its three cultural districts.^{2,3} From there, you can view case studies and find all of the information you would need, from planning and programming to securing funding and passing enabling legislation.

The National Endowment for the Arts’ OurTown Portal

Cultural districts are a popular strategy funded by the NEA’s OurTown Program. Read examples and case studies on the



Oliver Street in Station North in Baltimore. Flickr photo by Dorrett. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dorret/8365057676>

1 www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/toolkits/national-cultural-districts-exchange

2 www.americansforthearts.org/by-program/reports-and-data/toolkits/national-cultural-districts-exchange/cultural-districts-basics

3 www.americansforthearts.org/baltimore-arts-entertainment-districts

Cultural District Planning section.¹ Be sure to check out Station North, one of Baltimore’s cultural districts which specifically sought to capture transit riders who might not otherwise leave the station, and in the process transformed a once-blighted area into a cultural destination.²

OPPORTUNITY IN PRACTICE

Businesses create “A New Face for an Old Broad” in Memphis

Memphis, TN

In November 2010, business leaders in Memphis’s Broad Avenue corridor staged a two-day festival, “A New Face for an Old Broad.” Their purpose was to both attract foot traffic to the area, and build support for a proposal to create a bicycle connector linking two neighborhoods. Bringing together arts programming, pop-up businesses, and staged pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure to give residents “a taste of what’s possible,” a unique cast of private foundations and for-profit retailers succeeded in holding a spectacular one-weekend live demonstration that enticed residents out of their cars and drove up business. Once the creative juices started, they kept flowing. The group eventually secured funding for the project, including \$75,000 in private donations.

Moreover, positive results from the project and strong community engagement helped spur an entire movement for the City of Memphis to develop “Complete Streets,” including a new citywide ordinance requiring all new and reconstructed streets to consider the safety and needs of all users.³

The Guillaume Alby mural in Memphis. Flickr photo by Memphis CVB. <https://www.flickr.com/photos/ilovememphis/6070463835>



1 <http://arts.gov/exploring-our-town/project-type/cultural-district-planning>

2 <http://arts.gov/exploring-our-town/revitalizing-station-north>.

3 Read all about Memphis’s transition starting on page 39 of this Smart Growth America resource: <http://www.smartgrowthamerica.org/documents/complete-streets-southeast-toolkit.pdf>

Business leaders recently secured formal designation by the city as an arts corridor, and continued to develop the corridor as a destination in its own right. To date, more than \$20 million in private reinvestment has occurred in the form of new businesses and property renovations. Now, with support from ArtPlace America and the NEA, a nearby water tower will soon be transformed into an iconic work of art, while the nearby warehouse dock has been transformed into an industrial-style amphitheater featuring community-based performances, dance, music and theatre.

For more information about the district, visit the Broad Avenue Arts website: <http://www.broadavearts.com/>

Students from nearby Brewster Elementary School beautify a crowd-sourced crosswalk in preparation for a festival along Broad Avenue in Memphis, TN. Photo courtesy of the Community Development Council of Greater Memphis



TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND TAKE-AWAYS

Cultural district strategies large and small

There are strategies at a variety of scales;

Identifying districts: Sidewalk kiosks, street sign caps, custom crosswalk paintings, and pole banners can announce a district to the public.

Installing wayfinding: Incorporating cultural spaces and destinations on a map or branding individual buildings can give people a reason to follow the map or go inside.

Supporting busking and plein air painting: Welcoming musicians and street performers and people who

paint landscapes on site can remind residents and visitors that a neighborhood is vibrant and arts-friendly.

Turning vacant space into galleries: Exhibiting art works in vacant storefront spaces is an easy way to turn an eyesore into an asset.

Paths and corridors – Tapping art to build paths to commerce and culture El Paso, Texas

Greensboro, NC

While transportation planners address physical barriers between destinations, psychological barriers may still exist. Not a lot of people would put it that way, but anyone who has had to walk across an empty parking lot has a general sense of the idea. Public art and cultural programming can be powerful bridges to connect centers of commerce, link neighborhoods to one another, and maximize pedestrian amenities, as these examples show. In El Paso, a private locked parking lot separates two centers of cultural and economic activity, The Union Plaza District and the Downtown Arts District, so what could be a four minute walk requires a 15-20 minute detour around a convention center to get from one to the other. Not for much longer.

With support from the NEA, the city will soon complete a pedestrian pathway that will be a destination in its own right featuring a well-lit open public space with plantings, seating, public art, water fountains, a staircase amphitheater, murals and bike parking. The NEA provided some funding, and a local ballot referendum to fund the remainder of the project passed with over 70 percent of residents voting in favor. Learn more about how they did it on their NEA profile: <http://arts.gov/exploring-our-town/downtown-pathways>

In Greensboro, North Carolina, a local nonprofit partnered with the city to transform a railroad underpass that had once divided the downtown and surrounding neighborhoods. The project, Over.Under.Pass, encompasses a visually exciting and popular public art installation along a new greenway that encircles and defines the downtown. Read more on their NEA profile: <http://arts.gov/exploring-our-town/overunderpass>

MOBILIZE THE COMMUNITY TO ACHIEVE YOUR SHARED GOALS

Activate with the arts to promote shared goals and build consensus

Local units of government can tap local nonprofits or area organizations to identify and showcase support for projects or related community improvements.

Who can do it: Metropolitan planning organizations or a local unit of government partnered with local community based organizations. Local units of government identify community partners in the area of a project to work closely with on related improvements accompanying transportation projects. Community partners serve as ambassadors for positive change by putting forth bold, creative visions for their future and taking the lead on promoting them.

The role of arts and culture: Local ambassadors and arts-based focal points can help to build momentum and support.

When to do it: Try bringing in partners early, as soon as transportation a project is suggested.

OPPORTUNITY IN PRACTICE

Nashville gets more than a crosswalk

Nashville, TN

In Nashville, the Nashville Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) dedicated staff time to engage a local Latino services organization in planning a corridor with a new bus line. That organization's local voice is helping engage more constituents, develop community-led visions, elicit unique concerns about and solutions to transportation/development plans and ensure that stronger grassroots coalitions will take a front seat in determining how their neighborhoods change. Their involvement led to the city's first bilingual crosswalk (with instructions in both English and Spanish) that will soon be designed to reflect the neighborhood's diversity and cultural assets. This is inspiring residents, local businesses and community groups to think of their own ideas for transportation improvements in the area.

Nolensville Pike

Nashville's MPO has been a leader in demonstrating how an MPO can help build healthier communities, notably through incorporating new policies in 2010 that prioritized transportation projects with walking and bicycling infrastructure and dedicated funds for active transportation.



Crosswalk photo by Rochelle Carpenter, T4America

Next year, the Nashville Metropolitan Transit Authority will begin express buses along Nolensville Pike, a five-lane, fast-moving arterial with eroded sidewalks, few crosswalks and no bike lanes in one of the city's most diverse areas that is also home to the majority of Nashville's Latino population. With these upcoming transit improvements planned, the MPO saw an opportunity to engage community members in identifying concerns about and ideas for getting to the bus – while ensuring that the community has a hand in the vision for future changes in transportation and development.

Identifying a partner

The MPO partnered with Conexión Américas, a nonprofit that “aims to integrate Latino families in all aspects of life in Middle Tennessee,” as the means to best connect with Nashville's growing Latino community on the project. The two are securing funding to support greater involvement of Conexión Américas. Conexión Américas has long integrated the arts and culture in its outreach work and in its flagship building, Casa Azafrán, in order to reach more immigrants, refugees, Latino families and individuals in Nashville.

Dreaming big and developing a vision

Project partners, including artists Jairo and Susan Prado, developed a vision for a colorfully painted, bilingual crosswalk as the first desired transportation improvement. This crosswalk would serve a few goals: first, to

The product of a community visioning session for Nolensville Pike and Road in Nashville from June 2015. Photo by Rochelle Carpenter, T4America



connect their headquarters at the community center Casa Azafrán with the local bus stop and parking spots for staff and visitors. Second, to solidify the corridor as a home for the Latino community. And third, to inspire the imaginations of future partners to come up with their own ideas and participate in local planning processes to make them a reality.

An MPO staff member dedicated time for the project. The MPO and Conexión Americas reached out to the Metro Department of Public Works to advocate for the crosswalk; Conexión Américas was an essential partner in making the case. While obtaining approval for the creative design is still in the works, the Department of Public Works and the Tennessee State Department of Transportation delivered the state of Tennessee's first bilingual crosswalk, one that welcomes their diverse visitors with instructions in both Spanish and English.

Continuing collaboration

The involvement of Conexión Américas will be integral to both creating an artistic crosswalk in the near future and leading others who want to do similar projects. Furthermore, through a series of interviews with community members, workshops, and community meetings, Conexión Américas and the MPO will work with residents, business owners and community organizations to develop a community-led vision of the corridor as transit, walking and bicycling improvements are made, identify unique concerns about and ideas for transportation in their neighborhoods, and energize community members to participate in future planning processes. Momentum from the project has already helped catalyze additional community-led ideas for complete streets designs like improved sidewalks, new crosswalks, new bicycle lanes, improved lighting, traffic calming and new streetscaping, as well as more public parks along the corridor.

Lessons learned:

- Having dedicated staff from government agencies to help navigate regulations and decision-making processes can help the community realize their visions.
- Having an arts-based focal point can build momentum and support for public works projects.
- Engaging effective local messengers to voice the vision, explain the need and make the ask can make a world of difference when budgets are tight, backlogs exist and transportation projects compete.

TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND TAKE-AWAYS

Involve partners early

Doing so requires regular communication so that opportunities become available and partners know when and how to plug in. Including partners early and in tandem with project development, whether it is through convening an advisory board, facilitating a local area planning process, or creating an opportunity for public art or programming, improves the chances that they can understand and champion your efforts. While it is extra work and requires relinquishing of some control to bring additional actors to the table, paradoxically, doing so can strengthen your own case.

Schedule for success

In the NEA's profile of El Paso, Texas, for example, project planning for the Union Plaza/Downtown Green Space Connection project coincided with Plan El Paso, a community-driven comprehensive planning process for the city that supported better transit options and pedestrian-friendly development. The project was able to support these goals, which enabled it to have the political support needed to succeed. Read the full NEA profile: <http://arts.gov/exploring-our-town/downtown-pathways>

Youth voices help outreach efforts hit home

Oakland, CA

When regional leaders planned a new bus rapid transit (BRT) system in Oakland, CA, local nonprofit TransForm helped deepen outreach to ensure that the community would have a voice in the final design. In one example, TransForm worked with local group Youth Uprising to put together an original hip-hop song and music video, "Oakland for BRT" to get young people involved. As a result, students from Youth Uprising supported the new bus line and helped inform the public art components of the project.



Watch the video here: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=JKUHj9hapaU>

DEVELOP LOCAL LEADERSHIP AND CAPACITY

Support community-led visions and let the community work for you

Local nonprofits can use arts-based tools to bring attention to and build momentum for desired plans, projects and development efforts.

Unlike the last approach that focuses on what can be accomplished when a local government entity partners with a local nonprofit or arts group, this approach focuses on what's possible when local community partners (nonprofit, arts-based or others) set out on their own to develop and support community visions – and how that can provide good opportunities to collaborate with local governments to get things done.

Who can do it: Community partners can hold events and activities to identify local needs and strengths, and demonstrate their importance. Local government can make it a priority to listen to and support these efforts, and accommodate them as appropriate by providing supporting research and creating opportunities to coordinate and factor these efforts into regional and local planning.

The role of arts and culture: Community partners use arts as a tool to organize constituents, develop a common vision, create opportunities to be heard by local government, and develop closer partnerships to develop a more unified voice in the face of neighborhood change.

When to do it: Try bringing in partners early, as soon as a project is programmed.

OPPORTUNITY IN PRACTICE

Local visions fuel progress in Portland

Portland, OR

In Portland, Oregon, arts-based engagement has helped improve communication between local agencies and community members while supporting local advocacy efforts to ensure that a new bus line promotes health and opportunity for existing residents.¹

Rents have crept up around the City of Portland due to a well known population boom, moving east towards neighboring Gresham. So when Metro, the regional metropolitan planning organization proposed a new high capacity transit line connecting the two, many had concerns about neighborhood change and displacement. The Powell-Division Bus Rapid Transit (BRT) line will connect Portland and Gresham via a busy state highway that passes through a working class corridor that serves many of the region's ethnic minorities.

Metro convened a diverse steering committee (state DOT, city councilors, commissioners, local nonprofits, community groups and business districts, watershed council, local colleges, state legislator, health/equity/

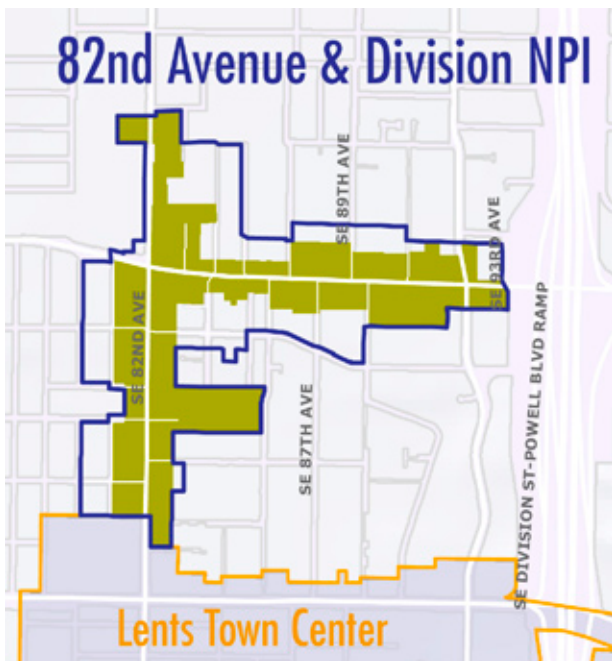
¹ Full copies of vision documents can be viewed here: <http://www.jadedistrict.org/About.html>.

environment groups, major employers) to guide the alignment and planning around the line.¹ Following that, several members of the steering committee developed a group to focus on the equity impacts of the line's planning and eventual transit service on the affected communities, joined by community members, advocacy organizations, professionals working on issues related to equity, staff from TriMet, Portland, Gresham, Multnomah County, the Oregon Department of Transportation, and Metro. This ad-hoc equity group has held ongoing and collaborative conversations to identify recommendations and develop opportunities that would ensure affordability and community benefits as the corridor develops. Having this diverse set of stakeholders has helped with the identification of opportunities. For example, one member is one of the region's largest developers of low-income housing, and having the county health department on board allows community advocates to back up desire for additional tree canopy with data about local health benefits.



Watch this video about the changes in the Jade District on the Metro website: <http://www.oregonmetro.gov/news/corner-change>

Tapping artists to mobilize and assess needs



For the local organizations that represent communities along the route, it was a priority to organize. The Division Midway Alliance (DMA) and local chapter of the Asian Pacific American Network of Oregon (APANO), centered in the Jade District, had a previous working relationship as peer members of “Neighborhood Prosperity Initiative” districts, a program which focuses on community economic development at the neighborhood scale through grants, training and support.² DMA and APANO utilized arts and culture to heavily involve existing community members, while providing a way to voice and begin to address concerns about gentrification and displacement.

How did they use arts and culture? As a first step to this process, APANO convened a series of community meetings that included an artist facilitator to dialogue and collaboratively produce community visions. Conducted in four languages, APANO used the meetings to solicit

residents' needs and vision for the corridor. Artists incorporated the responses into illustrations, which ranged from street improvements to parks and green space to signage and branding.

¹ www.oregonmetro.gov/public-projects/powell-division-transit-and-development-project/steering-committee

² www.jadedistrict.org/index.html

The meetings also allowed APANO to promote a healthy dialogue about the project. “It has been a great organizing tool,” said Todd Struble, Jade District Project Manager for APANO. “Part of our goal is shifting perceptions about what gentrification is and getting people talking about transit and displacement, so we can have a more unified voice around it.”

APANO has in turn used these illustrations in meetings with local leaders to both showcase desired outcomes from any capital improvements that accompany the BRT line, and illustrate the imagination and creativity in the corridor that they hope future plans will protect through affordable housing and capital investments.



Community forum photo by the Jade District. <https://www.facebook.com/JadeDistrict>

Tapping artists to showcase the community’s assets and strengths

APANO and DMA also hired two artist organizers to facilitate conversations with community members on how to reflect people’s concerns and ideas about transportation and development in their neighborhoods. The groups led outreach to market owners, residents of apartment complexes with diverse populations, schools, neighborhood associations and local groups with relationships to residents interested in development along Powell-Division.

Organizers then hosted a workshop in February 2015 for 30 artists and community members interested and engaged in community development issues. After the workshop, the artist organizers helped the Jade District and DMA select local artists to make small-scale art installations to bring attention to the groups’ shared strengths, including a robust international market community.

To date, seven artists have won small grants to develop creative placemaking projects that celebrate their neighborhoods. Many of the projects have helped form a narrative of the cultural/community assets that exist in these neighborhoods and have highlighted local businesses, many of which are owned by people of color. For example, a documentary showcasing the diversity of local food options will be screened at annual summer festivals that draw tens of thousands from across the region.

This has helped raise the profiles of communities, and bring community members together, as local groups organize to head off gentrification and displacement of existing residents and businesses. “I think it’s absolutely brilliant that we use artists to engage the community, said DMA district manager Lori Boisen, “we’re seeing community members feel like they can do something, and the artists are helping to activate that entrepreneurial spirit.”

The benefits for the community, Metro, and the region

The “visioning result” renderings and art projects have played a role in putting the Jade and DMA communities

on the radar. “Anything that helps our leaders to better understand these communities is a plus for the decisions that they ultimately make,” said Dana Lucero, Senior Public Involvement Specialist at Metro.

In APANO’s case, that later translated into a real opportunity. When APANO held a kickoff meeting to showcase its renderings, it not only brought many regional stakeholders together to talk about the future of the neighborhood, but also brought together numerous government agencies that don’t always talk. At the meeting, a staff member from Metro noticed desired community space on one of the renderings and began asking questions. In response to community interest in preserving long-term affordability as the area benefits from new investment, Metro acquired a furniture store property near the future transit station area, with the intention of seeking a developer to redevelop the property with long-term affordable housing.

While the site awaits redevelopment, Metro has leased the property to the Jade District at no cost, allowing them to use the building for youth programs, community activities, and art exhibitions. Metro is now working with an advisory panel including local representatives to help select a developer who is best able to design and develop the site in a way that reflects community values, while delivering on a core commitment to creating permanent affordable housing at the future transit station area.



The furniture store intended for affordable housing and used today for community events. Photo by the Jade District. <https://www.facebook.com/JadeDistrict>

Lasting impact

Through their engagement, Metro has built valuable relationships that will make future plans and projects easier to complete in the future. As a further result of the visioning work led by APANO, DMA and the artist organizers, it will be easier for Metro to develop a local area plan with strong community input and support. That has benefits for the community but it will also ultimately save the agency money that advocates would like directed to implementation of a Locally Preferred Plan. APANO’s early leadership through its community visioning and local planning have also earned the group a growing influence in the regional development community, having subsequently joined the Portland Development Commission and the influential Region One Area Commission on Transportation convened by Oregon’s DOT.

All of this collaborative activity has set the stage for the design phase of the project which is managed by TriMet. These local groups are actively engaged with TriMet’s Public Art Program to leverage the visioning work that has been done to date and maximize involvement in that aspect of the project.

Supportive local government

Along the way, Metro has supported these efforts, from partnering on the planned affordable housing

development, to providing the equity group with resources on equitable development. In March, 2015, Metro drafted a resource kit of equitable development practices throughout the metro region. This research includes equitable development tools, case studies, lessons learned and best practices from projects across the nation.¹

But perhaps the strongest lasting impact the creative placemaking component of this large-scale advocacy effort has provided is in bringing people together. “It creates a unified force, which we need given the issue we’ll face with changing real estate market,” says Todd Struble. “We would not have worked as closely together otherwise, and if it’s just one or two neighborhoods, it is easier to mask over.”

“You can see the wall coming down because of the partnerships,” added Lori Boisen. “People feel connected on both sides of the freeway”.

Lessons learned:

- Art can be a conversation starter about difficult issues in the community.
- Art can make it easier to develop trust and collaboration between local government and historically underserved communities.
- Having a visual representation of community desires can create better opportunities for conversation than only a list of demands.
- Showcasing the positive aspects of your community can attract support and advance a shared vision for what you’d like the future to look like.

TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND TAKE-AWAYS

Stories make it personal

Storytelling is another way to allow people to share their perspectives in their own words and often on their own turf. This could involve hosting a “story slam” for community members to share an experience in the corridor where a project will go, or publicizing a request or contest for individuals to share their experience, ideas, or needs around transportation.

The Orton Family Foundation has supported storytelling efforts that fed into community plans in Damariscotta, Maine, Golden, CO, and Biddeford, ME. Visit their website to read bios and learn more. The Foundation offers a free, comprehensive “Community Heart and Soul Field Guide” for its methodology for soliciting a community’s stories and translating those stories and values into actionable recommendations.² The Foundation also has a resources page with suggestions, checklists, and tools to achieve goals like enhancing local character, encouraging inclusive government, and supporting housing choice and affordability: <http://www.orton.org/resources>

1 www.oregonmetro.gov/public-projects/powell-division-transit-and-development-project/equity

2 <http://fieldguide.orton.org/main-sign-up2>

Try funding small-scale projects and installations

Incentivizing local programming and activities is an easy and powerful way to put local community organizations, business improvement districts and individuals to work to improve the brand, image and appeal of corridors. While it's not easy to turn over funds or public space to allow people to experiment, the success stories below, excerpted from the longer Twin Cities and Los Angeles case studies available along with this guidebook, show it can pay off.

Creative placemaking projects change the narrative during construction

The Irrigate program in Minneapolis-St. Paul leveraged the creativity of community members to transform the narrative of the lengthy construction period for the Green Line (light rail transit) from one of struggling businesses to a thriving, vibrant corridor. Irrigate is a nationally recognized local artist-led creative placemaking initiative.¹ The program provided funding to hundreds of artists (which they defined as anyone living or working in the corridor with a creative idea), to partner with local organizations in bringing positive attention to the corridor through activities from murals to dances to a giant dog puppet. Irrigate projects generated over 100 positive media stories, and the program's success has spread to other communities. Visit the Springboard for the Arts Irrigate page to learn more, watch a video about Irrigate's impact featuring an introduction by former St. Paul Mayor Chris Coleman, and access a toolkit for replicating success in your community. Learn more about additional creative placemaking efforts in the Twin Cities in our longer included case study.



This video by Irrigate tells the story of their placemaking work during and after the construction of the Green Line. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=4oePXcW6axk>

Los Angeles turns streets into public spaces

The City of Los Angeles' Great Streets challenge grants, award up to \$20,000 to community groups to develop projects that "re-imagine our streets as vibrant public spaces."² The community-driven initiatives eligible for the grants include cultural programming for public space, or events that draw people to a Great Street. Read more about the results in our longer Los Angeles case study.

Likewise in the Twin Cities, the small size of the Irrigate grants (\$1000 or less) made for a lighter lift. "The stakes were lower" says Erik Takeshita, Deputy Director of the Local Initiatives Support Coalition, "so if a few tanked, so what."

1 <http://springboardforthearts.org/community-development/irrigate/>

2 www.lamayor.org/mayor_garcetti_announces_great_streets_challenge_grant

ORGANIZE EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES

Arts and culture-driven events can build buzz while building understanding

Events and activities provide a draw and bring positive attention to an area. And they can also be a forum for gathering new ideas and public involvement.

Who can do it: Local units of government can create an accommodating atmosphere by permitting, providing transportation for, participating in, and using events as an opportunity to listen. Local partners can lead and develop events.

The role of arts and culture: Performances and cultural activities create a draw. Artists may organize events or feature their work. Local small businesses and area organizations can lead and participate.

When to do it: Try building events throughout the project process. Think ahead of the ribbon cutting, whether it is to kick off a planning process or bring people together during a drawn out project process.

OPPORTUNITY IN PRACTICE

Promoting safer streets and cultivating ownership of a transportation asset

San Diego, California

In the City Heights neighborhood of San Diego, community partners are helping improve the transit user experience, cultivate local ownership of a transit line, and improve a station area with community participation and creativity.

In 2015, The San Diego Association of Governments (SANDAG) and the Metropolitan Transit Service (MTS) opened the \$45 Million “Mid City Rapid 215” bus rapid transit line with five stations in the City Heights neighborhood. But while the new bus service is a valuable new transportation option for getting around, the journeys to and from and the bus stops are still far too dangerous. In a harrowing reality, 114 kids were hit by cars over a four-year period while walking or biking within ¼-mile of a City Heights school.

When SANDAG made plans for the line, there wasn’t a meaningful or robust community engagement process. The engineering/design process did not have a single public workshop and residents and advocates were not invited to participate, according to Randy Van Vleck, Active Transportation Manager at the City Heights Community Development Corporation (City Heights CDC). “City Heights’ resident transit advocates and community leaders felt like the project was shoved down their throats. While there is a high demand for transit improvements in City Heights, that doesn’t mean the project will necessarily be embraced if there is poor community engagement that excludes resident input from the decision making process.”

When the \$45 million bus rapid transit expansion came through the neighborhood, it arrived quickly and with

little notice. SANDAG constructed a state of the art bus station at Fairmount and 43rd, but its generic design felt like a lost opportunity at what is an important gateway to the area for local businesses. And while the line has seen strong ridership, local resentment remains about the impersonal design of the station and remaining barriers for residents to get to and from the station safely. The community also had not forgotten a fight that advocates lost in the late 20th century against SANDAG and Caltrans to prevent the razing of seven blocks of homes to make room for the new I-15 freeway extension, completed in 2001.

To some members of the City Heights community, improvements that would reflect their goals seemed destined for a tomorrow that may never come.

To help change that, in the spring of 2015, the City Heights CDC and local transportation advocacy nonprofit Circulate San Diego worked with local partners to organize events to bring positive attention and local energy to their desire for safer streets. They started by getting ideas from the community. At their first event, held in March 2015, over 40 City Heights residents convened to learn about the project, discuss community assets and take a walking tour of the area to get ideas for improvements that would improve safety and access on foot, bicycle, wheelchair, scooter and other additions that would generally make the streetscape more enjoyable for people traveling on foot. Over 200 ideas were recorded, from streetscape improvements to pocket parks.

From there, in May 2015, City Heights CDC hired local artist Vicki Leon to help lead a single-day staging

ACT: The Boulevard event photo by the City Heights Community Development Corporation



event so that attendees could “try out” some of these ideas at a Pop-up Placemaking event called ACT (Art+Community+Transit): The Boulevard. Leon planned a series of installations, some of which “piloted” potential improvements, while local businesses and organizations lent their buildings to serve as participatory art galleries to create an additional draw.

ACT: The Boulevard Programming

Alley Hub near Mid-City Rapid Station: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Stencil making stations • Participatory murals • Temporary landscaping 	Linear park in four parking spaces: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Landscaping greenery • Shade and seating • Live local music
Quilt of Lights Mural on Fairmount Ave: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 20' x 10' artist-led mural • Electrical box painting 	Doors of the World Interactive exhibit: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participatory world map • Visual screen between U-Haul trucks and adjacent transit station area
Exhibition of public art: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • UCP Thrift Store • Humble Heart Thrift store • U-Haul 	

From the City Heights CDC website:

At the Pop Up Placemaking Event, three local bands played, aguas frescas, chips and salsa were served, and four parking spots were transformed into a linear park for people to enjoy. In addition, the Doors to the World interactive art exhibit asked transit riders and passersby to drop a pin on a map to indicate their homeland. While the partner organizations planned the Pop-up Placemaking event itself, local City Heights artist Vicki Leon was engaged to bring to life ideas generated at the prior Visioning Workshop. Vicki oversaw the creation of several murals during the event painted by community members. She also developed several higher cost, permanent art installation concepts that could be installed in the future, and unveiled these design concepts during the festivities.

The event drew over 300 people and “inspired attendees to creatively think about improvements to the area.” Now, Leon is working to determine how much it will cost to get some of the installations, such as shade and seating, installed permanently. Feedback from that event will also feed into the development of a community-led vision for the Mid-City Rapid station at Fairmont and 43rd. And now, the Neighborhood Ethnic Business Cluster is teaming up with the newly formed Fairmount Arts Collaborative to do a series of



ACT: The Boulevard event photo by the City Heights Community Development Corporation

projects to transform Fairmont Avenue into an arts corridor. (See the approach on Cultural and Arts Districts and Corridors on page 39.)

While the community still must fundraise to make more of these installations permanent, City Heights CDC and Circulate San Diego are calling the project a resounding success in their goal to promote community ownership of the station. “It allowed people to directly interact with ideas for the transit station area. It was more effective and engaging than a traditional public meeting,” says Randy.

Most of the event’s temporary installations occurred on private property, and local government did not play a formal role, though representatives from the city and SANDAG did attend the event. Conspicuously absent, representatives from the transit agency did not attend. Noting that local organizations and residents most often get information from the local transit operator in the form of agendas that are not user friendly or advertised on an e-mail list, he added, “Unfortunately, they’re not really programmed to build relationships and trust.”

But the hope of City Heights is that events like ACT: The Boulevard can inspire different thinking about what a public meeting can look like. “We are a place-based group that builds community engagement into everything that happens. It’s not just about the projects, it’s about how it feels to engage, and create that safe and comfortable space for our residents to participate in decision making processes,” says Randy. “We want to change that culture and have the agencies embrace public participation.”

TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND TAKE-AWAYS

Call it a pilot to make experimentation easier

Businesses prosper when Chicago experiments with its parking spots

The City of Chicago’s Make Way for People Program opens the city’s streets, parking spots, plazas and alleys to temporary programming and market opportunities.¹ The program started as a pilot in partnership with local nonprofit the Metropolitan Planning Council (MPC) to temporarily transform parking spaces into miniature parks (sometimes called “parklets”) for public use, an approach that has grown in popularity around the country.

Findings from a business survey by MPC noted that local businesses near the parklets, which they dubbed “People Spots,” saw up to an 80 percent increase in foot traffic and 20 percent increase in sales.² The City quickly adopted the



Flickr photo by John Greenfield.
<https://www.flickr.com/photos/24858199@N00/15217944417>

1 http://www.cityofchicago.org/city/en/depts/cdot/supp_info/make_way_for_people.html

2 www.metroplanning.org/work/project/12/subpage/4

program and expanded it to include People Streets (public spaces in “excess” asphalt areas), People Plazas (programming and retail activities in CDOT owned right of way) and People Alleys (a permitting-based process allowing temporary events and activities).

Each of these programs benefitted from being experimental themselves. In Chicago, it took some convincing for the City’s DOT to allow MPC to pursue the project on even a temporary basis. Such is the beauty of calling something a pilot. “It may not be easy for an organization like the Chicago Department of Transportation to allow a new program,” says Kara Riggio, MPC’s Placemaking Project Coordinator, “but if you call it a temporary pilot, then nobody’s locked into a long-term commitment.”

For more information:

Project for Public Spaces (PPS) is a nonprofit planning, design and educational organization “dedicated to helping people create and sustain public spaces that build stronger communities.” Check out their toolkit, “Developing Public Participation Tools in Transit-Dependent Communities.”

<http://www.pps.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/05/Tools-for-Transit-Dependent-Communities.pdf>

Better Blocks helps communities design events “to enable multi-modal transportation while increasing economic development.” The “Better Block” project combines locally driven programming with multi modal transportation installations so that communities can actively engage in the build-out process and provide feedback in real time.

<http://betterblock.org/>

INCORPORATE ARTS IN PUBLIC AND ADVISORY MEETINGS

Bring in fresh energy, ensure culture has a seat at the table and spur creative processes

Almost nothing gets built today without some level of public engagement and most large-scale planning efforts engage the public to some degree. But whether this input is truly inclusive, timely or helpful varies widely. Many places have experimented and seen creative ideas emerge from collaborations with culture organizations and “social practice” artists to providing a space for residents to articulate their own ideas and visions to bringing arts and cultural organizations into an advisory role.

Who can do it: You can partner artists with planners, or charge community groups to partner with artists or develop their own creative ideas, or find other ways to include artists or cultural organizations in your efforts.

The role of arts and culture: Artists can bring new ideas and formats to the public engagement process. And, the incorporation of arts programs can open the door to support from arts-based foundations and funders who are eager to contribute to the greater good.

When to do it: Try inviting some new people to your next meeting.

OPPORTUNITY IN PRACTICE

Going beyond the data points

Detroit, MI

Southeast Michigan’s metropolitan planning organization has good data, but a less foundational understanding of the lived experience of transit users. To change that, a local group partnered with the Metropolitan Planning Organization (MPO) to gather stories of where regular transit users need to go and the challenges they face in using transit. These results will inform planning while creating powerful standalone tools that demonstrate need.

Southeast Michigan is recovering from a decade-long statewide recession, which has resulted in significant decline in both population and jobs. Those losses have forced the region’s MPO, the Southeast Michigan Council of Governments (SEMCOG), and other governmental agencies to rethink how they plan and design infrastructure and other public services for residents and businesses. In an effort to position southeast Michigan for success in a 21st century economy, SEMCOG’s 2040 Long Range Transportation Plan recognizes that to compete for people and jobs and provide quality transit services, the region’s transportation system must be vastly improved.

To better understand how the existing transportation system works for the region’s most vulnerable populations, SEMCOG began by convening a task force made up of local government representatives,

transportation providers/professionals, health care providers, environmental and social service organizations, and other key stakeholders. This taskforce was established to define core services and provide input on the current transportation system's capacity for residents without reliable access to a car to reach crucial services such as jobs, groceries, and healthcare.

The "Access to Core Services Task Force" has met quarterly to inform SEMCOG's efforts to identify gaps in the system and determine appropriate policies and technical assistance to address those gaps. In addition to the task force, SEMCOG partnered with the Michigan Fitness Foundation (MFF) to collect direct local community feedback, ensuring that the voices of locals are integrated into the project.

MFF saw an opportunity to apply creative placemaking as a way to understand and develop strategies to address challenges of accessibility at the neighborhood level. Working with SEMCOG, MFF developed a plan to fund community groups representing neighborhoods and constituencies that are disproportionately impacted by challenges of accessibility (i.e., youth, elderly, low-income, people with disabilities). To fully understand the varying needs across the geography and among these constituencies, community groups were asked to host "Creative Community Conversations." Rather than requiring a particular format or number of data points, groups would host conversations with community members using inventive and fun approaches to identify where their constituencies need to go, how they get there, and the challenges they face, and ultimately showcase outcomes through final products of their choice (e.g., video, photo book, etc.).

MFF hosted a kick-off workshop for the leaders of these community groups, featuring artist speakers, hands-on exercises, examples and template materials to inspire and support the groups in developing their own creative engagement process.

In one series of exercises, artist and urban planner James Rojas led a workshop allowing participants to construct models using toys and found materials.¹ Their first prompt was to individually construct and share their diagram of a favorite childhood memory. As he describes it, "The builders spoke with conviction as they told compelling, entertaining stories illustrated through the objects, colors and the details that matter in their memory. Everyone intently listened to these visceral details that engaged the group visually, orally and emotionally."

The memory model building exercise warmed participants to the second exercise that involved working in groups to construct their ideal transportation system. While the charge was aspirational, it fed into grounded discussion. One group's



Creative Community Conversations participants with the table of found objects used by James Rojas. Photo by Chris Nowak, Michigan Fitness Foundation

¹ See pictures and read more about Rojas' consulting practice at Placelt.org

model from the first exercise, for example, featured a sledding hill made of excess snow, which led to a later discussion about the challenges residents face in getting around on foot when sidewalks are not plowed.

Rojas explains, “Because the participants generate their vision, the activity has greater relevance to their lives. This process helps participants articulate their ideas, and create a sense of ownership and attachment to place that can inspire them to move forward to make transformation happen.”

Participants left excited about the project, with the biggest breakthrough for most participants being the connections made by sharing their creativity with one another. Leaders from SEMCOG and the community groups alike left the training not only with pages full of notes, but with a deeper understanding of one another and a personal experience of how creative processes help build trust and understanding.

Community organizations will use the foundation of the kick-off meeting to plan their creative community conversations that meet the unique needs of their constituents and think through an artistic end product (i.e., photo book, video, song, play, etc.) that tells the story of peoples’ real-life experiences with accessing services. As the community groups will benefit from capturing the story of the work that needs to be done in their communities, SEMCOG will ultimately benefit from a better understanding of local transportation needs to inform their policies and plans for the region.



Photo by Chris Nowak, Michigan Fitness Foundation

TOOLS, TECHNIQUES AND TAKE-AWAYS

Bring arts into your planning meetings Atlanta’s MPO cross-fertilizes planning with arts

Atlanta, GA

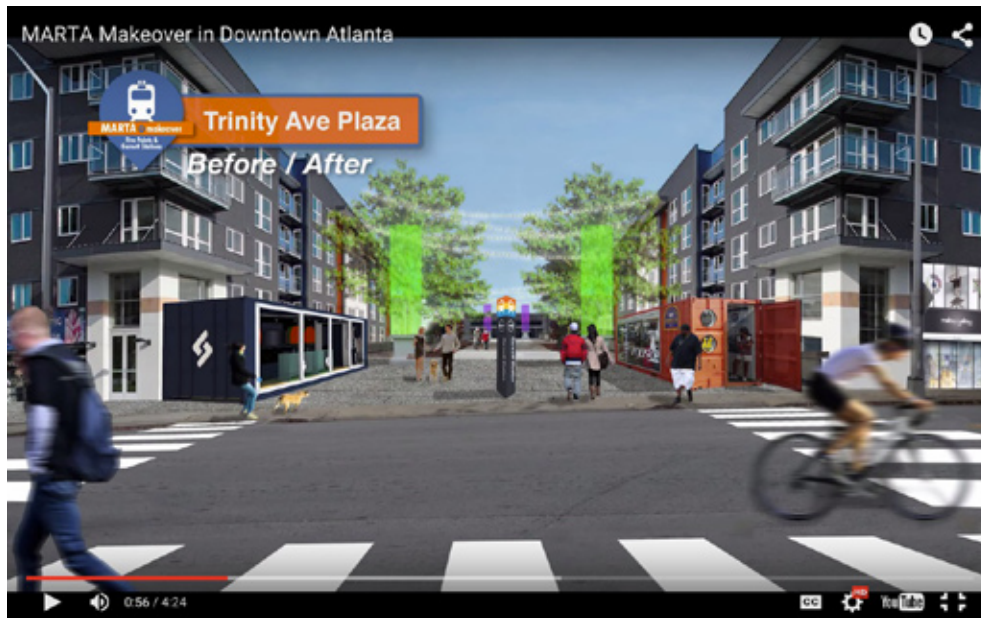
Since the early 1990’s the Atlanta Regional Council (ARC), the region’s metropolitan planning organization (MPO), has grown in understanding the importance of arts, culture and creative industries to regional prosperity. In the early 2000’s it partnered with the Metropolitan Atlanta Arts and Culture Coalition (MACC) – a decade-old entity that had been the leading voice for the development and funding of cultural organizations in the Atlanta region— to conduct major research on creative industry data and co-host public forums on the value of arts and culture in economic development, regionalism, education and quality of life.



But while Atlanta hosts one of the highest ratios of arts-related businesses per capita in the nation, its arts funding community is less robust. In 2012, lean budgets combined with a sea change in local arts leadership made the future of MACC uncertain, threatening to leave the region without any touchstone arts leadership group. Supported by resounding community feedback, ARC offered to take on arts and culture in its regional planning efforts, voting in 2012 to assume the role “to promote the Atlanta region as a premier center for the arts and culture.”¹

Now, ARC hosts cultural organizations and planners side-by-side. Incorporating the two has been an ongoing process, but ARC ultimately settled on convening an interdisciplinary team from every division (transportation, research, land use, aging, etc.) to identify opportunities to integrate arts into functional planning, guided by an advisory committee of regional stakeholders. While the team always has more ideas than funding, they have managed to launch several successful arts forums, administer a competitive grant program to help communities install public art, and are currently developing a cultural inventory toolkit for local communities.

In transportation, the group has helped Community Improvement Districts reimagine several MARTA transit stations through arts and tactical urbanism, and provided a shuttle service for seniors to and from the symphony. ARC currently uses data from the New England Foundation for the Arts to benchmark the role the creative economy plays in the region overall and is always on the hunt for new types of arts and cultural data to incorporate into its efforts.



Watch a video about the MARTA makeover from Central Atlanta Progress here: <https://youtu.be/wmurDwoIUBM>

1 www.atlantaregional.com/local-government/arts-culture

APPENDIX: TRACKING OUTCOMES

Many leaders are experimenting with different ways to measure the performance of creative placemaking practices and while every community and process will be different, there is no gold standard. This is the best representation of what we know now, but our understanding continues to evolve. We're still learning. Here are a few basic pieces of guidance as you attempt to measure the effects and outcomes of your efforts.

Process matters

The social and community-building benefits of creative placemaking can be as much or more about the processes as the end product. So when you're assessing positive outcomes, don't forget to think about who and how many people were involved, the partnerships that were built and any positive developments that might eventually come out of those partnerships.

Assess quality as well as quantity

Measurable objectives are important, but they are not the only indicators of success, especially for other benefits you may want to capture such as improved partnerships and building pride of place. Sometimes those outcomes are turned into dollars and cents, in terms of neighborhood revitalization and improved economic activity. But a richer picture goes beyond numerical data to quotes, testimonials and anecdotes.

Other indicators of success could be observable phenomena that may or not be quantifiable. For example, a well-designed station area that is kept active with both programmed and spontaneous activity could lead to women feeling safer in the area at night. A beautiful street or plaza with good lighting and things to see could become a place where couples regularly come for a romantic stroll. When visitors make it a point to come see the results of your efforts they may be more likely to return or send others.

These outcomes may help revive neighborhoods, open opportunities and affect individual investment decisions. Some of these effects can be captured through numerical measurement, while others will have to be documented in different ways.

EXISTING RESOURCES

Developing a baseline: NEA Arts and livability indicators

The National Endowment of the Arts has developed indicators to evaluate the success of its OurTown grants (<http://arts.gov/grants-organizations/our-town/introduction>) for creative placemaking through its Mayors Institute on City Design. The NEA recommends using indicators for which data are available nationally to help communities better understand and communicate the value of their creative placemaking efforts. The indicators cover four topic areas:

- **Attachment to community:** Seven measures such as length of residence and election turnout.
- **Quality of life:** Six measures such as median commute time and violent crime rates.
- **Arts and cultural activity:** Five measures such as arts and cultural nonprofits per capita and the earnings from arts and entertainment.
- **Economic conditions:** Five measures such as income diversity and median household income.

While the NEA chooses indicators that can show comparisons “before” and “after” the investment, it does not rely on those data points alone. Instead, the NEA conducts site visits consisting of a series of small group discussions to gather baseline data on the community and the region where a creative placemaking project is taking place in order to measure results.¹ For more information, view the full report and the more recent arts data profile on these indicators.^{2,3}

ArtPlace America’s vibrancy indicators

There is not a standard way of evaluating a creative placemaking approach, since it will be unique to you. ArtPlace America notes, “we simply say it is important to know when you can stop doing something, cross it off your list, and move on to the next thing.” In order to develop a baseline snapshot to measure impacts in communities where they are making grants, ArtPlace America has previously developed a set of “vibrancy indicators.” While ArtPlace has recently simplified its evaluation methodology, this approach offers some ideas that may help in developing your own. The ArtPlace vibrancy indicators included:

- **Employment rate**
- **Number of creative industry jobs:** Information, media, arts and creative endeavors
- **Walkability:** Many destinations within walking distance
- **Cell phone activity:** High levels of activity on nights and weekends and in places people congregate away from home and outside of regular 9 to 5 business hours
- **Number of mixed use blocks**
- **Number of jobs in the community**
- **Population density:** Higher concentrations of people versus being thinly spread out

1 <http://arts.gov/exploring-our-town/project-process/measuring-project-results>

2 <http://arts.gov/sites/default/files/VALI-Report.pdf>

3 <http://arts.gov/artistic-fields/research-analysis/arts-data-profiles/arts-data-profile-8/arts-data-profile-8>

- **Percentage of independent businesses:** Locally owned, independent businesses (more is better)
- **Number of indicator businesses:** Businesses that represent destinations of choice for cultural, recreational, consumption or social activity
- **Percentage of workers in creative occupations:** Higher than average concentrations of residents who are employed in the arts, writing, performing and other similar occupations

Borrowing from academia: measuring the social impacts of arts and culture

University of Pennsylvania Professor Mark Stern has led groundbreaking research demonstrating how the arts have an impact on communities in powerful ways. For example, he has proven that low-income neighborhoods with more cultural assets offer greater access to economic opportunity than those with fewer cultural assets, all other variables being equal. Controlling for demographic, housing, health, social, environmental and educational measures, he found that only direct economic investment is a stronger benefit. In “Measuring the Outcomes of Creative Placemaking,” Stern shows how to measure a region’s cultural assets to understand how investing in arts and culture changes the neighborhoods where they occur, and how those differences have ripple effects for the surrounding city and region. Stern’s approach is data-intensive, including a “multi-dimensional definition of social well-being” with 13 sub-indexes. While smaller jurisdictions might have a hard time replicating Stern’s methodology, a well-resourced metropolitan planning organization (MPO) might consider developing a similar index, potentially in partnership with an academic or other research institution.

Learn more on the Social Impact of the Arts Project website: <http://impact.sp2.upenn.edu/siap>.

Quantifying results with the triple bottom line

Some urban planners use the concept of a “triple bottom line” of social, environmental and economic benefits, each of which can be measured and weighted as priorities and politics dictate. The creative placemaking approach has a similarly multi-pronged gold standard of physical, economic and social benefits. It goes like this: The meaningful incorporation of arts and culture into redevelopment can **physically** create appealing urban spaces that **economically** attract increased investment and **socially** build trust and connectedness: Physical appeal, economic investment, social trust.

The three are interrelated; social cohesion is a powerful economic stabilizer, appealing urban spaces are more likely to attract investment, and investments influence the options that people have and how they interact with one another.

Each factor of the “triple bottom line” can be assessed individually using indicators that align whatever goals your community sets for a project or projects. The level of detail that you choose to go into will depend upon your priorities, the benefits that you’re seeking to achieve and the story you wish to tell. While most projects will deliver stronger benefits in one area than another, most large funders encourage the best achievable combination of all three.

MEASUREMENT IN PRACTICE

For a concrete example, let's take a look at the Night Market events held in the Little Mekong District of St. Paul, MN, adjacent to the Green Line's Western Avenue Station.

Asian business owners in the area sought to develop their competitive edge in capitalizing upon their new light rail station. Inspired by similar night markets in Southeast Asia, the series of events showcase the food, art, history and culture of the Little Mekong District. The Asian Economic Development Association designed the market to attract visitors to Little Mekong and provide small businesses and individual entrepreneurs who many not have a shop space to market their products.

During the markets, the streets at the Green Line Western Station Area come alive with people as local vendors peddle their wares while artists, dancers, musicians and large-scale puppets provide entertainment. This physical transformation can be experienced, documented with pictures and videos and explained with testimonials.

The market has provided a focal home for the Southeast Asian community, and an opportunity for residents of all ethnicities to interact in a novel setting. It has attracted a diverse audience from across the Twin Cities, and given many artists the chance to showcase their work. You could measure this social impact by noting that the market has attracted more 4,000 visitors over the eight weeks that it ran, or that it has provided a showcase for more than two-dozen artists.

The events also have brought positive attention to a neighborhood that was hungry for it, while providing space and customers to disparate vendors. These economic outcomes can be documented in terms of numbers of small businesses created or sustained; sales volumes (vendors earned an average of over \$1,000 a night); the value of the market in terms of a similar level of exposure through advertising, etc.

These combined measures all feed into narrative descriptions, media coverage, funder reports and bragging rights. To see pictures, read more about the market and view related press, read the Funders Collaborative profile: www.funderscollaborative.org/CCFC_News/little-mekong-night-market-brings-celebration-community-university-avenue

Choose your own adventure: small-scale and customized strategies

In this table are some other ideas and resources for evaluating outcomes within the goals of creative placemaking: (1) create appealing urban spaces that (2) attract increased investment while (3) building social capital and trust.

Goal	Example	Think about measuring	Example metric	Document with
<p>Physical: create appealing urban spaces</p> <p>If your goal is to provide overall improvements to infrastructure and streetscapes, and to develop a more human scale...</p>	Parklet	How is the space being used? How is that different? How do people respond? How do businesses benefit?	Number of people who use a parklet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Before and after photos • Videos • Direct observation • Survey on the impacts in revenue, attendance, etc. on nearby businesses/organizations • Interviews and testimonials
<p>Economic: attract increased investment</p> <p>If your goal is to focus on adding value to underutilized places...</p>	Street festival	What has changed from before? How is that an improvement?	Growth in number of attendees	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Head counts • Business surveys • Tax receipts • Land values • Economic impact studies • Interviews and testimonials
<p>Social: build trusted networks</p> <p>If your goal is to improve public perceptions, bring stakeholders together, develop stronger networks, or improve pride of place...</p>		Who was involved? How were they affected? What did they have to say?	New participants in the planning process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Number of participants (individual instance or over time) • Number of organizations consulted • New partnership developed • Social capital surveys (http://www.hks.harvard.edu/saguaro/communitysurvey/) • Number of press articles/people reached by media coverage • Level of engagement on social media • Interviews and testimonials