

Introduction

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When the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco published its first volume on creative placemaking five years ago, there was still a lingering fear in many people's minds that the term and concept would be another trend du jour among both the arts sector and community planning and development sector alike.

And yet, over the past five years, the work has continued to grow and deepen to become not just a kind of project that happens but a kind of practice that community developers and the systems that support them are advancing for the long term. We hope this new volume will offer an opportunity to dive in from every possible angle to explore what this work looks like in practice—developmentally, relationally, and in impact—and what are the implications—policy, capital, practice, research, and more—of this growing field for our community development systems. The joint editorial team has designed it together to go beyond simple case-making and the idea that arts and culture has value. Our aim is to move the conversation into questions of what does it look like, feel like, and mean, and how and why might other community development organizations go on similar learning journeys.

This is a critical time for community developers to look for new tools to address the entrenched and increasingly complex challenges that communities face. At ArtPlace America (ArtPlace), we believe the arts and culture sector has the necessary tools, knowledge, and skills to deploy in partnership with the community planning and development sectors to improve the place-based outcomes that will lead to equitable, healthy, and sustainable communities.

We refer to this intersection as creative placemaking, and we see this practice not only continuing, but also being an important and critical driver of how the field of community development is evolving into the future. For us, creative placemaking is the intentional integration of arts, culture, and community-engaged design strategies into the process of equitable community planning and development. It's about artists, culture-bearers, and designers acting as allies to creatively address challenges and opportunities. It's about these artists and all of the allies together contributing to community-defined social, physical, and economic outcomes and honoring a sense of place.

ArtPlace is a collaboration among a number of foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions that began in 2011. Our mission is to position arts and culture as a core sector of community planning and development. We do this work because we envision a future of equitable, healthy, and sustainable communities in which everyone has a voice and agency in creating contextual, adaptive, and responsive solutions. To this end, we've invested more than \$100 million over our lifespan to grow the field of creative placemaking

through demonstration projects, in-depth investments in organizational change, and ongoing support for research and field-building. As a part of our work, we continue to identify and support new stakeholders to embed this way of working and are building the support structures for a sustainable, strong field.¹

As we stand almost at the end of a decade of work, we are able to look at how our own relationship to the practice of creative placemaking has evolved. The 2014 issue of the *Community Development Innovation Review* journal,² which marked a critical validation moment for the field, intentionally sought to broaden what had been a discussion largely oriented around activating places toward economic vitality into one that looked more systemically at how arts and culture is embedded across many community development systems and outcome sets.

Around the same time as the launch of that 2014 issue, ArtPlace was beginning to embark on two new initiatives in support of its broader field-building initiatives: the Community Development Investments (CDI) program and a new set of research strategies. The research strategies were designed to build knowledge and understanding around the roles that arts and culture play across a broad range of outcomes already articulated by various fields within place-based community development—housing, health, public safety, environmental sustainability, etc.—with an end goal of further embedding arts and cultural strategies within the systems of those professions.

The CDI program, meanwhile, was designed to surface a different kind of knowledge about creative placemaking: at the time, many place-based community development organizations were growing increasingly interested in the idea of creative placemaking and partnering with arts and culture, but a very small number actually felt as if they knew how to do it well. Although investing in arts-related spaces and hosting arts programming are not entirely unfamiliar to the world of community development organizations, the idea of partnering on equal ground to apply the components of artistic practice, process, and cultural ways of knowing as a part of strengthening outcomes for a community was largely new. Some community development organizations had arrived at interesting arts-based strategies naturally through preexisting relationships, the passions of leaders and staff members, and the particular contexts of their communities. But over the past decade, with new national and local funding incentivizing changing practice within the field, organizations that had never before considered arts and culture were interested in trying out a new way of working.

For ArtPlace’s goal of creating a strong field of creative placemaking, community development organizations are a key audience. Community planning and development

1 ArtPlace uses Bridgespan’s Strong Field Framework as a part of long-term strategic thinking: <https://www.bridgespan.org/insights/library/philanthropy/the-strong-field-framework-a-guide-and-toolkit-for>.
2 <https://www.fibsf.org/community-development/publications/community-development-investment-review/2014/december/creative-placemaking/>

organizations are often, as the late Jeremy Nowak³ described in early conversations about the program, “long-term stewards of place.” When their approaches and practices shift, so, too, do investments and long-term decision-making in communities. As organizations, they are able to choose to operate across silos, partner broadly and widely, and think expansively about improving the places they serve for the residents who live there, and yet they have operational blind spots and a toolbox that can be limited by industry policies and standards. These capacities create the valuable conditions for arts and culture to become not just the proverbial “icing on the cake” but the “special sauce” in advancing equitable change.

Therefore, the focus of the CDI program was community planning and development organizations that hadn’t previously incorporated arts and culture into their core work. The challenge was for them to take three years to learn how to do this work in a way that advanced the organization’s core mission and to set up the support structures internally for arts-based strategies to become a sustainable way of working.

To advance our larger field-building mission, ArtPlace designed this initiative as a learning opportunity to follow six very different organizations in different community contexts around the country on their journey to experimenting with and incorporating this new way of working. We provided each organization with \$3 million and asked them to begin their work with cultural asset mapping to understand their community and the arts sector through a new lens, and then to work collaboratively with artists to develop relevant projects over the course of the initiative.

During the course of the three years, we worked with the organizations closely to determine at each phase of their journey: What did they need to understand to do this work? Where were the stumbling blocks? What kind of expertise can be taught, and what needs to be lived? How might this work live long-term within the organizational departments and structures? We had monthly coaching sessions and webinars, periodic site visits, convenings, and workshops. We worked closely with the Center for Performance and Civic Practice—a team of national artists who regularly design supportive processes for artists and non-arts partners to get to know each other and develop projects together. And we watched each organization develop an incredible body of work in partnership with artists that both had amazing outcomes for their communities and also fundamentally changed their institutions. The amount of funding was certainly a factor in their ability to grow, but for us, providing that level of resources was a way to see what happens when the availability of funding isn’t an excuse for not being able to learn something new.

3 In addition to his incredible legacy in the community development financial institutions (CDFI) and philanthropic fields (including a time as chair of the board of directors of the Federal Reserve Bank of Philadelphia), Nowak was an early investor in ArtPlace during his time at the William Penn Foundation, served as Interim executive director of ArtPlace in 2014, and was an incredible thought partner and site reviewer in the early days of the CDI program.

And throughout the whole program, PolicyLink served as our stalwart research and documentation partner. We gave our partners there the incredible challenge of orienting the lessons from this work not back to us, but rather toward practitioners and the field to help drive long-term systems change at the organizational and field levels.

This volume is one of the results of this work, which reinforces three key lessons throughout:

1. Artists and culture-bearers can help community planning and development organizations achieve their core missions in new ways AND also broaden what those organizations see as core to their missions.
2. Building transformative cross-sector relationships requires long-term investments of time and resources in experimentation, learning, and growing.
3. Creative placemaking helps community planning and development organizations be more responsive to the communities they serve by tackling the entrenched issues that cross the traditional silos of policy and funding.

For the creative placemaking field to advance, we need to continue to push the boundaries and structures that have inhibited this kind of work from flourishing. We hope this journal provides an invitation and some new paths for thinking about how, collectively, we can transform community development through arts and culture.

The co-editors would like to acknowledge three giants of the community development field who were instrumental to this program and whom the world sadly lost in 2018 and 2019: Dean Matsubayashi, former executive director of the Little Tokyo Service Center; Rick Goodemann, founder and former executive director of the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership; and Jeremy Nowak, who took on more roles than the world can count. This program wouldn't have been the same without their wise words and leadership.

Lyz Crane is the Deputy Director for ArtPlace America, a national collaboration among foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions that works to position arts and culture as a core sector of comprehensive community planning and development, where she focuses on transforming community development practice. Previously, she served as the Communications Director at ArtHome, an organization that helps artists and their communities build assets and equity through financial literacy; and the Director of Program Development and Program Manager of the Shifting Sands Initiative at Partners for Livable Communities, a national nonprofit leadership organization working to improve the livability of communities. In 2009, Crane was named a 'Next City Vanguard' by urban affairs magazine Next City. She received her MPA in policy analysis from the Robert F. Wagner School of Public Service at New York University and her BA in Urban Studies and Sociology from Barnard College, Columbia University.