

Overview

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This issue of the *Community Development Innovation Review* captures a fast-moving target: the evolution of arts and cultural strategies being brought to bear for community preservation, health, and revitalization. This evolution has led to a kaleidoscope of ever-multiplying, colorful, and moving performances and exhibits, not just in theaters and galleries but in medical facilities, streets, storefronts, parks, and historic buildings. This new and expanded value of the arts to community development has not been limited to the production of diverse and creative cultural materials such as sculpture, printmaking, photography, music, theater, experimental film, storytelling, quilting, beading, interior design, or many other disciplines and crafts. Artists of various kinds have also honed their capacities as facilitators, guides, motivators, and strategic planners, and they have significantly helped many of the country's leading community development organizations to advance their missions. This growth in smart "civic practice" by artists augurs well for the future of this kind of collaboration.

This linkage of arts with community development has brought about unprecedented cultural exchanges among ethnic groups that had not known much about each other, It has generated new ways by which artists can help to pass down ancient traditions from one generation to the next. It has removed barriers to community ownership of key cultural assets and brought new processes for strengthening the social fabric and identity of places. The intentional strengthening of relationships between the community development and arts and culture sectors have brought about positive outcomes in housing, health, and other dimensions of community development.

A Closer Look at Community Development Investments

Examples of all of these innovative practices and positive outcomes can be seen in the Community Development Investments made by ArtPlace America in six diverse places over the past four years, and it has been our privilege at PolicyLink to document and analyze those organizations and their partnerships. The community development organizations, most of which are in housing or health care, operate in highly regulated and rule-bound systems which normally limit their flexibility and put boundaries on their scope. This time, they got the freedom to think differently and to draw on the creativity and practical techniques provided by working on cultural issues and community identity with artists.

CDI Participating Organizations and Activities

■ Cook Inlet Housing Authority Anchorage, Alaska

Guided by Native Alaskan village values, this regional tribally designated housing authority creates housing opportunities as a way to empower people and build community.

Focus: Solving problems in new ways and elevating resident voices.

Key projects: “Living Big, Living Small,” exploring small space living with set designer Sheila Wyne; “#MIMESPENARD,” mitigating business disruption during a road construction project with performance artists Enzina Marrari and Becky Kendall; the Church of Love, transforming a former church slated for demolition into a community center/art space/performance venue; and embedding story gathering and listening as an organizational practice with Ping Chong + Company.

■ Fairmount Park Conservancy Philadelphia, Pennsylvania

This is an urban parks conservancy that leads and supports efforts to improve Fairmount Park’s 2,000 acres and 200 other neighborhood parks citywide.

Focus: Working with artists to make city parks relevant for a more diverse population of Philadelphians, and celebrate the history, culture, and identity of its neighborhoods.

Key projects: A community catalyst residency with the Amber Art & Design collective at the Hatfield House in the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood, including cultural asset mapping, social engagement, and community building; leading a master plan process for the Mander Recreation Center; co-hosting the West Park Arts Fest in East Parkside; and expanding the scope and reach of The Oval, a seasonal pop-up park in downtown Philadelphia.

■ Jackson Medical Mall Foundation Jackson, Mississippi

This organization manages a 900,000-square-foot medical and retail facility in central Mississippi with a mission to eliminate health-care disparities holistically through the promotion of creativity and innovation.

Focus: Enhancing their role as a neighborhood anchor by fusing arts and culture with health and economic development goals.

Key projects: Intergenerational programming and festivals linking artistic production and economic development with the delivery of health services; “Reimagining the Jackson Medical Mall” with Carlton Turner to introduce history and storytelling into the design of the space; a new community garden and kitchen; and internal and external creative engagement practices with Significant Developments, LLC.

■ Little Tokyo Service Center Los Angeles, California

This organization provides family services, affordable housing and tenant services, and community organizing and planning for the nation’s largest Japantown in downtown Los Angeles.

Focus: Facing increasing pressures of displacement, homelessness, and high costs of living, they launched the +LAB (“Plus Lab”) Arts Integration project to test new ways to promote the equitable development of ethnic communities.

Key projects: “Takachizu” with Rosten Woo and Sustainable Little Tokyo, inviting residents to share treasures from the neighborhood; #MyFSN, which seeks to assert “moral site control” over the future of the contested First Street North site; 341 FSN, an experimental storefront space designed to explore community control and self-determination; and the +LAB artist residency program.

■ Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership Southwest Region of Minnesota

This organization provides housing development, preservation, rehabilitation, and supportive housing services for a rural 30-county region.

Focus: Partnership Art, which uses arts and cultural strategies to incorporate new voices, including Minnesota’s growing immigrant communities, into local planning processes.

Key projects: Milan Listening House, exploring immigration stories and the concept of home to inform the revitalization of public spaces; Healthy Housing Initiative, an outreach and education toolkit reaching new Latinx communities; “Creative Community Design Build,” where artists engage communities to reimagine underutilized downtown buildings; and hiring Ashley Hanson as an internal artist-in-residence to help sustain their arts and cultural approaches.

■ Zuni Youth Enrichment Project Zuni, New Mexico

This effort is devoted to enhancing the health and resiliency of youth on the Zuni Pueblo in New Mexico.

Focus: Integrating Zuni arts and culture into planning, design, and construction of a new youth center and park.

Key project: Supporting an ongoing artists’ committee and other local artists to co-design and contribute to long-term stewardship, activation, and programming of H’on A:wán (“of the people”) Community Park.

The participating organizations and their partners have taken on some of the most pressing and complex issues of our time, including gentrification and displacement, racial health inequities, the isolation of immigrant newcomers, and the historical trauma resulting from racism and oppression. They have combined their expertise and standing with the tools and ways of thinking, imagining, and acting of artists. As a result, they have helped residents to own and express the identity of their communities, built cultural resilience, and changed the terms of engagement and the methods of neighborhood planning and placemaking.

The new strategies can also be found all over the country, as the practice of creative placemaking, whether it is called that or something else, has become more sophisticated and more often attentive to the values and priorities of equitable development. Governmental, philanthropic and some for-profit investors in community development have supported arts and cultural strategies, and each of the big three community development intermediaries have designed ways to build up the capacity of groups in the field. The result is a blossoming of creativity and exploration by both community development organizations and arts practitioners, and greater mutual understanding of how to work together. The approach might be known as “creative placekeeping,” “arts, culture, and equitable development,” “arts-based community development” or as something else, but whatever it is called, a set of common core values, concepts, and capacities are proliferating across a very diverse landscape.

Navigating This Issue

We designed this special issue of the *Review* to bring forward the lessons generated from the Community Development Investments sites and to place them in the broader context of this fast-changing field of practice. To achieve that, we reached deep into the participants in the CDI initiative, getting accounts not only from the organizational leaders but also the artists with whom they worked so closely. We then cast a much wider net, soliciting contributions from the leaders of national CD organizations, bankers, governmental arts officials, philanthropists, and policy advocates. The issue includes 27 pieces from 45 contributors. We thank all of these contributors for enthusiastically joining us on this journey to document, understand, and share what we have all learned. The resulting collection has, we hope, an appealing breadth of styles, perspectives and issues but thematic consistency and practical guidance for investors and practitioners.

We would like to express our appreciation to the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco for their openness to this variety of styles, stories and voices, which go somewhat beyond what is usually seen in journals on investment strategies and CD practices. It is in the spirit of this type of creative work to have an article in the form of a theater script, to have artists tell their personal stories, and to have the indigenous leaders of community organizations explain how their approach to arts and culture is grounded in their own experience of their people’s traditions and collective trauma. There are bankers and social investment leaders speaking in terms that are decidedly different from the typical approach to getting CRA credit, but in ways that show the readers how that gap can be bridged. All of these forms of expression are pointed

toward the goal of identifying a path forward from these remarkable pilots and local innovations to a robust and sustainable national field of investment and practice.

Section One

The first section of this issue addresses the three pillars of the research framework which PolicyLink created with the CDI grantees and ArtPlace to structure the evidence and findings from four years of documentation of the initiative. These three main themes are:

Organizational transformation. We examine how values, goals and strategic direction were shaped and altered through this experience. To bring about this change, the internal operations of the organizations were retooled in order to more successfully –and hopefully permanently – integrate arts and culture into their whole agency, not just a discrete grant-funded project.

New processes and forms of collaboration. The organizations learned, through trial and error, new ways of working with, and learning from, artists, and while each situation and its artistic products may be unique, those methods and effective practices are generalizable to many other situations.

Community development outcomes. The arts and cultural strategies changed the manner in which these organizations interacted with residents and other stakeholders. They provided tools by which to weave a stronger social fabric and by which community engagement and organizing could be newly energized if not transformed. These new relationships led to progress toward positive outcomes in affordable housing, neighborhood preservation and revitalization, youth development, population health, and other goals of the organizations, with more outcomes likely to be realized long-term as the projects and practices continue to bear fruit.

For each of these themes, we have compiled a comparable set of pieces that includes:

- A short framing essay, to convey the main theme and subareas within it, and to capture the overall lessons from across the six sites.
- First-person accounts by two artists who collaborated with the CDI grantee organizations on sustained and sophisticated engagements related to this theme
- An edited dialogue of CDI leaders from two communities with a member of the PolicyLink team, to reflect and elaborate on their experience with respect to this theme
- A topical Response from the Field by a leader in one of the three largest community development intermediaries.

Section Two

The next set of articles provide cross-cutting explorations of the lessons from the CDI experience. The first, a theater exercise, comes from the team at the Center for Performance and Civic Practice – facilitators of arts-based approaches to community problem-solving

who worked extensively alongside program director Lyz Crane from ArtPlace America with all six sites. This section also contains two group dialogues about the implications of CDI – the first among key leaders of the CDI grantee organizations. Those six leaders and their organizations have undergone a shared experience for four years, and this was a rare on-the-record conversation about what that whirlwind of opportunities and innovations meant for them personally, for their organizations, and for the field. The other group dialogue was among researchers from five different disciplines with wide experience in community-based arts, culture and design about the importance of viewing this work through multiple lenses and bringing in historical knowledge to research into the community development field. The final piece in this section, by Jamie Hand, director of research strategies at ArtPlace America, describes how the many cross-sectoral research scans commissioned by ArtPlace in the past five years are providing guidance for the creative placemaking field that complements the documentation of the CDI initiative.

Section Three

The final collection of articles presents the perspectives of leaders in federal and state arts and community development policy, private investment, social investment and philanthropy. Their voices are significant on the national stage and their thoughts about where the field should go next will be influential. Mary Anne Carter, head of the National Endowment for the Arts, reflects on the potential for community revitalization unleashed by the Art Endowment's Our Town program, while leaders of the National Association of Community Economic Development Associations and the National Assembly of State Arts Agencies author a joint article systematically outlining areas for growth in state policy in both their domains. The next two articles, by Deborah Kasemeyer of Northern Trust and by Deborah Cullinan and Penelope Douglas of the CultureBank initiative, draw upon their unique and deep experiences to invite new ways of thinking about investment in the arts for community change and revitalization. The collection is closed by Rip Rapson, President of the Kresge Foundation and Michael McAfee, President and CEO of PolicyLink, in conversation about the lessons of CDI and the need for arts and culture to directly address the biggest and most challenging issues of racial and social justice.

Conclusion

It is hard to capture the essence and flavor of culturally-focused activity within the confines of a journal such as this, but the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, ArtPlace America, and PolicyLink have attempted to widen the lens and incorporate more of the color and variety of the cultural mosaic that the CDI initiative has supported. For those readers interested in learning and seeing more, we encourage you to visit www.Communitydevelopment.art, maintained by PolicyLink for the field of arts, culture, and equitable development. The site includes extensive video, photography and text documentation of each CDI site and

the overall themes of the initiative and is continually being expanded with more writings and video about other projects, programs, and policy change strategies.

We hope that this issue helps readers recognize the potential of this type of community development through the creativity shown by its practitioners and the growing evidence base about its methods and its impact on the health and well-being of the people it touches.