

Moving from Engaging to Organizing with Arts and Culture Strategies

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Introduction

In spring 2015, the organizations who applied to the Community Development Investments (CDI) program hypothesized that working with artists and arts organizations could help them to imagine bold, inventive solutions to long-standing challenges and breathe new life into their ways of doing work. But just as families and cultural groups are associated with traditions, languages, and rituals, so too are professions. This is true for housing developers whose success depends more on meeting deadlines and balancing budgets than design perfection, as well as artists, who might value meaning and expression over timelines and regulations. So, in order to prove their early hypotheses correct, the organizations who received these investments had to escape their comfort zones and learn new customs: how artistic and cultural practices create new vehicles for engagement, how to communicate with and co-create with artists, and the surprising impact of embedding creativity into the daily life of nonprofit management. This brief describes the activities and outcomes of artists working with community-based organizations to achieve a variety of community goals, including planning, development and operations of parks/open spaces, housing, community and health facilities, and community control over land use decisions.

The Community Development Investments program was launched in 2015 by ArtPlace America to support community-based organizations to sustainably incorporate arts and culture into their core work. This one-time program provided \$3 million to each of six community planning and development organizations, over three years, to develop creative placemaking projects that could help them achieve their missions more effectively and bring about positive outcomes for their communities. ArtPlace America provided technical support through coaching, site visits, monthly webinars, connecting sites with national creative placemaking experts, ongoing advice and workshops with the national artist team of the Center for Performance and Civic Practice, and convening in-person peer exchanges where the sites learned from each other's achievements, setbacks, strategies, and recommendations.

Now, after four years, these investments have yielded valuable insights and lessons for a wide range of fields of practice, from affordable housing development to parks stewardship, from the social practice of art to youth development, and from community organizing to public health. The CDI organizations and their partners have taken on and struggled with 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, with new tools and ways of thinking, imagining, and acting of artists, helped residents to own and express the identity of their communities, built cultural resilience, and changed the ways in which neighborhood planning and creative placemaking are carried out.

This is one in a series of briefs that describe these changes, insights, and lessons, based on the experiences of these six organizations, the residents of their communities, and their many partners in the arts. Learning from experience has been a goal of the Community Development Investments program, and PolicyLink has been conducting research with the participants in the program since 2015. Each brief addresses a different facet of our research framework, and together they provide a systematic introduction to the changes that have taken place. The website www.communitydevelopment.art contains a wealth of materials about the CDI experiences, including briefs and webinars, descriptions of the numerous projects implemented at each site, video interviews with the staff, artists, and residents, and other information about the growing field of arts, culture, and equitable development.

CDI Participants and Activities

Cook Inlet Housing Authority

Anchorage, Alaska

Guided by Alaska Native village values, this regional tribally designated housing authority creates housing opportunities 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 to 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 holistically eliminate health-care disparities 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 and community development 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:wan (“of the people”) Community Park.

Why Engagement and Organizing Are Essential to Community Development

Soliciting insights from the mall walker community at Jackson Medical Mall by significant developments LLC. (*daniel johnson*)



During the Community Development Investments program, these six organizations deployed arts and culture strategies that transformed their community engagement into something more like community organizing, with results such as increased community leadership, agency, and power. This brief will describe how this move from engagement to organizing was accomplished by five of the six organizations. Each section includes a description of the arts and culture strategies that most demonstrated a move from engagement to organizing along with a table of key lessons. Other briefs in this series offer deeper insight into organizational change and evolution, community development outcomes, and the process of working with artists.

In this brief we identify two overarching lessons from the community engagement and organizing work that CDI organizations undertook with artists and cultural strategists:

1. **Increasing Community Influence:** Artists' creative process—conceiving, making, and explaining—transformed community engagement by centering people in the community development work of the six CDI organizations. Arts and culture have served as a catalyst for using engagement activities to build community voice, agency, and influence while advancing transactional and actionable housing, real estate, project development, and property management goals.
2. **Deepening Organizational Commitment:** The CDI organizations realized and then adopted meaningful and powerful community engagement practices. Artists and arts collaborations created more meaningful forms of community engagement that influenced the trajectory of these organizations and their projects and disrupted unequal power dynamics in significant ways. The six organizations' increased willingness to embrace community-organizing outcomes and roles is one of the most tangible outcomes of the CDI program.

Community Engagement and Organizing: Two Approaches to Improving Lives

Engagement and organizing are important to community development because the field encompasses the intersection of strategies designed to *make places better* with strategies to *improve the lives of people*. Engagement and organizing are two approaches that are especially suited to operating in this intersection. *Making places better* includes efforts like affordable housing development, park and open space development and management, and other forms of real estate development and management, such as small business incubators, nonprofit offices, and facilities for social services, health care and childcare. *Improving the lives of people* includes capacity-building, leadership development, and direct services such as childcare, small business assistance, financial literacy training, housing counseling, and job training. Many community development organizations are also involved in policy advocacy and local planning in service and defense of these place- and people-based goals.

The ideal of community development is to operate comprehensively to reflect the many systems at play. In practice, organizations are usually more narrowly specialized, though some of them blend these efforts in different combinations. The field tends to oscillate in long cycles, from periods where it seems as though building low-income tax credit housing is all that can be carried out, to times when organizations take on ambitious, multidisciplinary community-building agendas. For example, currently many community developers have seen the importance of influencing the social and environmental determinants of health in their neighborhoods, and that framework is informing and encouraging their broader agenda.

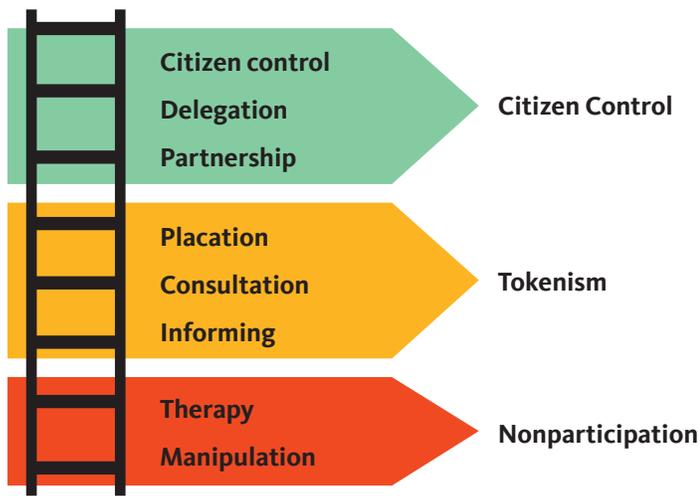
In community development, engagement techniques have historically typically been used when a goal has already been defined. Development of affordable housing, parks, and other types of facilities requires community development organizations to adhere to public processes pertaining to building and zoning approvals and allocation of public subsidies. Community engagement processes can be used for these types of projects to shape the project, and also to inform the public and fulfill public notice requirements as well as to enlist support or address and defuse opposition.¹



Engagement and organizing are important to community development because the field encompasses the intersection of strategies designed to make places better with strategies to improve the lives of people.

Participation, outreach, and public involvement processes are also used by government agencies, for-profit real estate developers, and even other businesses to conduct or dress up community engagement without any intentions to adapt or change projects in response to the feedback. M. Barnes and P. Schmitz describe the risks of these “top-down” engagements, from comparing top down and bottom-up engagement in the Newark, New Jersey, schools, as “one that spans a wide range of issue areas” and that “policymakers and other social change leaders [who] pursue initiatives will determine whether those efforts succeed. If they approach such efforts in a top-down manner, they are likely to meet with failure.”² Moreover, the real estate capital market drives expediency and, in some situations, community engagement is used as a way to preempt opposition. Engagement can be used to inform and consult, but also to manipulate, assuage, and placate. Arnstein’s Ladder of Participation³ lays out the path that engagement can sometimes take to partnership, delegated power, and community control, but participation is insufficient by itself to achieve those goals. To attain more, an organizing framework is also needed.

Arnstein (1969) Ladder of citizen participation



Source: Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224

Community organizing usually arises from contested terrain. Issue-based organizing in the United States was born in the 1940s out of a turbulent and potent mix of working-class frustration, labor movement activism, and discontent over racial inequity. Early targets were corrupt city governments, predatory banking practices, environmental pollution, and institutionalized forms of discrimination such as redlining. Saul Alinsky established modern community organizing in Chicago and later wrote *Rules for Radicals* and founded the Industrial Areas Foundation, cornerstones in the organizing canon. In addition to the hundreds of faith-based neighborhood or parish-centered grassroots organizations that thrive today, the anti-war, Chicano, feminist, gay rights, and Civil Rights movements were all informed by and substantially adapted Alinsky's tenets and tactics.⁴

This type of organizing centers the leadership of community members so that they can define their self-interest, map the local power and influence, and translate that into political goals and strategies for collective action. Community organizing is most often based in the residents of a place: a town, a neighborhood, a church parish, a cultural or racial enclave, but it can also sometimes enable those who receive services or benefits to develop their power, such as clients of financial literacy training or residents of affordable housing, or those who are most disenfranchised or lack voice and agency, such as youth or limited-English speaking immigrants. The point of such voice, agency, and power is to gain a measure of control over their lives, their neighborhoods, the fate of their community, and sometimes over the community development organizations themselves. The leaders of organizing efforts should, ideally, be open to reflection and change based on what the process shows them.

Comparing typical community engagement and community-organizing efforts:

Community Engagement	Community Organizing
Primary focus on public participation needs or obligations of transaction, policy, institution, or campaign.	Primary and foundational focus on nurturing and building power, agency, and leadership of community members or residents.
One-to-many relationship structure.	Many-to-many relationship structure.
Fixed or less flexible process.	Open-ended process.
Time-bound process.	Continuous process.

Arts and Culture: A Bridge from Engagement to Organizing

By using arts and cultural strategies that gave authority and responsibility to artists and community members, organizations in the Community Development Investments program turned the process of community engagement into a form of community organizing. This demonstrates that artists and arts and cultural strategies can be valuable assets and leaders of community engagement in ways that fulfill the promise of authentic participation.⁵

Community development organizations of all kinds need to interact constructively and purposefully with their constituents, neighbors, clients, tenants, partners in business, leaders of other nonprofits, and people with whom they have a range of other working relationships. Without this interaction, things do not get done, needs and priorities are not expressed or understood, plans are not implemented, projects are not built, organizations can lack accountability, and larger scale change does not take place.

There is an art to building and sustaining such relationships. The ways in which community developers build and manage these relationships depend on their goals. Sometimes it is as seemingly simple and limited in scope as inviting comments on a proposed new project. At the other end of the spectrum, community developers can become organizers, in that they actively inform, train, and mobilize local residents and other groups to build power and influence to affect critical planning and policy decisions, and bring about significant change. Community developers can be found all along this spectrum, from the most modest engagement to the most assertive, politically sophisticated community organizing.

Artist Tina Takemoto leading a +LAB workshop in 2018 about documenting the history of the Little Tokyo neighborhood. (Little Tokyo Service Center)



While none of the six Community Development Investments organizations was new to community engagement, each group's experience was grounded in the legacies of their sector:

- The three housing development organizations (Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership, Little Tokyo Service Center, and Cook Inlet Housing Authority) had plenty of experience working through the process of real estate development, including mandatory public input processes built into public funding and approvals; however their experience with community organizing varied greatly.
- The two health-related organizations (Zuni Youth Enrichment Project, Jackson Medical Mall Foundation) had built their organizations around outreach processes commonly utilized in social service and health-care delivery, but the community development goals they set for themselves were unlike anything they had ever attempted before and this drew them into the processes of community engagement and organizing.
- The one parks organization (Fairmount Park Conservancy) was responsible for communications and marketing of innovative programs and neighborhood park stewardship throughout 10,200 acres that include Fairmount Park and more than 200 neighborhood parks around the city, but their complex lineage, including being born out of a public agency and having merged in 2015 with a historic trust, left little room to explore new and different ways of engaging community members.

These Community Development Investments organizations experimented with completely new approaches to engagement by employing arts and culture strategies that have helped them to identify a suitable balance between the differing levels of authority and responsibility that they and their community members experience. Embracing this differential, and the willingness to strike a balance between the organization and the engaged community, is a fundamental shift and a precondition for moving from engagement to organizing. This brief covers lessons from five organizations and explores how they developed over time, and what it means for other organizations who may wish to follow a similar path.⁶ Lessons from the sixth, the Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership, are described in the Strengthening and Connecting to Community Social Fabric brief⁷ because they offer insights into the ways that engagement and organizing relate to organizational integration into a community's social fabric.

If these groups had limited themselves to holding hearings in the conventional way or running planning sessions with familiar facilitation exercises such as “dot voting” to solicit priorities, visualizations of scenarios, or had even conducted one-on-one conversations to build relationships in the style of grassroots, base-building organizers, they likely would have made only modest progress. Instead, the creativity and imagination unleashed through the arts and culture strategies pushed the organizations in new ways and helped them achieve a stronger connection with those they sought to engage or organize.



Arts and culture strategies have helped these six organizations to find a suitable balance between the differing levels of authority and responsibility that they and their community members experience.

Lessons from Los Angeles

The **Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC)** is a community development corporation that started as a response by activists to a need for linguistically and culturally competent social services for the Japanese American communities of Little Tokyo and Southern California. During the CDI program, it sought both a site-specific outcome—the right to control the redevelopment of a publicly owned site in the neighborhood—and a narrative change outcome in popularizing the story of the site’s and neighborhood’s history as a means of justifying this right. Working with artists to increase the community’s sense of power and agency and enhancing the neighborhood’s social fabric—the weave of relationships between where and how people relate to each other—were strategies for achieving both of these outcomes. And just as the outcomes were intertwined, these strategies were interrelated; arts and culture helped LTSC work with and through this complexity. More insights into the process of how arts and culture approaches helped LTSC and the other CDI organizations work with the social fabric of a community can be found in the forthcoming brief on Strengthening and Connecting to Community Social Fabric.⁸

LTSC ran three years of experiments in the integration of arts and culture which came to be known as the +LAB (“Plus Lab”) Artist Residency program, to partner with artists to help address the threat of gentrification and displacement. A few years before joining the Community Development Investments program, LTSC and its partners established a community vision through an extensive community planning process—maintained as an ongoing collaboration known as Sustainable Little Tokyo (SLT)—that called for the redevelopment of the First Street North and nearby “Mangrove” parcels for community use. The Community Development Investments

program offered LTSC and SLT a way to continue their active engagement of community members by working with arts and culture strategies to create tangible projects, such as exhibitions, marketing campaigns, and events with physical output, like a magazine, placemats, and a film, that sustained an elevated attention to the SLT vision among the broader public audience of elected officials and other influential civic leaders. This sort of community pressure on decision makers to uphold the Sustainable Little Tokyo vision has been a central part of the community’s efforts to influence real estate development in the neighborhood. Without arts and culture strategies to create these tangible projects, and LTSC’s strategic and organizational guidance in them, there would likely have been much less attention from decision makers and, as importantly, the Little Tokyo community at large.

In interviews and research and documentation convenings,⁹ Scott Oshima (artist organizer for SLT), Dominique Miller (LTSC planning coordinator), and Grant Sunoo (LTSC director of planning) describe how Little Tokyo Service Center and its four partner organizations—Sustainable Little Tokyo, Japanese American National Museum (JANM), Japanese American Cultural & Community Center (JACCC), and Visual Communications (VC)—have adapted their collaborations over three years in the Community Development Investments program. They describe how:

- leadership of community members is being prioritized (including long-time social service recipients and long-time community members reconnecting with community priorities);
- new work and projects are created collaboratively with participants; and
- their work with artists has a more explicit focus on securing site control over more of the remaining publicly owned land in Little Tokyo.

Key Lessons from the Little Tokyo Service Center experience

Increasing Community Influence

- Through culturally resonant arts-based engagement, social services recipients and others become more involved in advocating for community priorities.

Deepening Organizational Commitment

- Working together on arts projects with arts and culture organizations helped LTSC to find appropriate engagement approaches for their different constituencies.
- LTSC recognized their arts and culture partners as amplifiers of their land use planning and advocacy campaigns.

These observations represent a move closer to a form of organizing with distinct values and qualities.

One of the early moves that LTSC made was to turn a cultural asset mapping process into a community-curated public exhibition called Takachizu, created by artist Rosten Woo. Rejecting the need for another process that would result in a document about the community, Woo, LTSC, and SLT instead turned to the community itself to become experts and holders of history and meaning. In essence, the Takachizu process mapped the people of Little Tokyo themselves as assets. This repositioning of “asset” from object to subject was the first of many instances of a dissemination of power to community members to increase their influence, and in creating the first tangible output of the CDI-backed efforts.

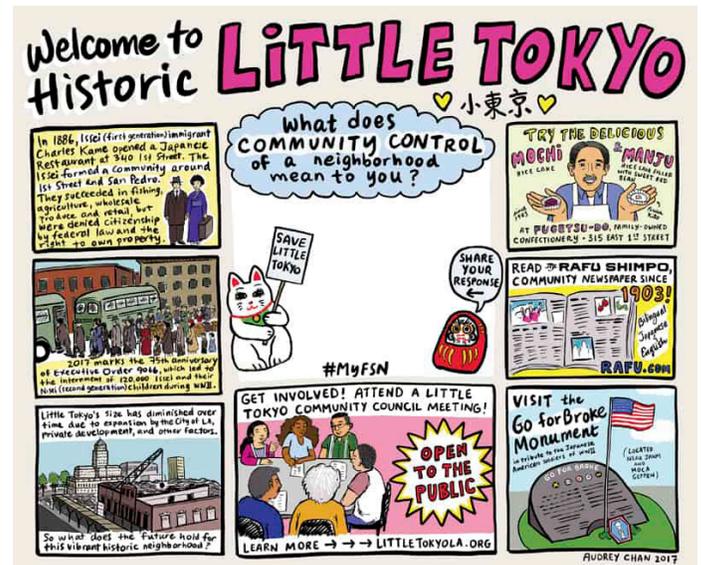
Little Tokyo Service Center’s first collaborative projects, known as “Launch Projects,” provided support to three established cultural organizations—JANM, VC, and East West Players—to pursue projects activating First Street North. They achieved this by focusing on remembrances of the 75th anniversary of Executive Order 9066, signed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt in 1942, permitting the Secretary of War to prescribe military areas and initiate the unjust incarceration of Japanese Americans to internment camps.

Between these first collaborative projects and the most recent +LAB call for artists in 2019, LTSC and its partners learned how to effectively and usefully engage the arts in community development. Their efforts evolved in the following way:

- The Launch Projects had an indirect reference to arts and culture themes (referring to the analogous historical displacement of E.O. 9066).
- The 2018 +LAB artist residency had an indistinct theme, “Community Control and Self Determination.”
- The 2019 +LAB artist residency showed integration through a declarative theme as seen in the active voice and systematic focus of the theme “Ending Cycles of Displacement.”

Grant Sunoo described the 2019 +LAB call for artists as being more explicit than any past projects about the desired community outcomes—the 2019 theme was “Ending Cycles of Displacement”—and was aimed at generating collaborations that build community capacity.¹⁰ Based on the first residency, LTSC learned that, given the community context, artists and their partners would welcome more specific direction about the goals of the residency. Little Tokyo Service Center

One of four placemats distributed to neighborhood restaurants to expand the advocacy base for community control and self-determination in the Little Tokyo community. (Little Tokyo Service Center)



developed an understanding of their curatorial responsibility to ensure that the community development purpose was explicit, even while setting up a program that was respectful of the need to leave final products or projects initially unspecified.

This willingness to plan for and manage an open-ended creative process mirrors a core tenet of community organizing in which organizers start with relationships and work with communities to develop campaigns, strategies, and tactics based on the community’s interests, needs, and goals. At the same time, effective community organizing focuses on what is actionable and purposeful, in this case the goal of reclaiming a specific piece of land as an achievable act in the face of systemic displacement pressure.

Reflecting this maturing of their community development curatorial role, the 2019 call for artists lays out a clear statement of the needs, opportunity, and campaign objectives:

Projects should be designed to refine the community’s vision for these sites via interactive engagement and artistic collaboration with community members and stakeholders—particularly those who are traditionally left out of planning processes...Projects should be designed to encourage the City of Los Angeles to implement Little Tokyo’s vision for the subject sites and/or call attention to the legacy of displacement as a means to underscore the importance of the community vision. These projects should also be designed in a way that they can be sustained by the community after the conclusion of the residency period.¹¹

Lessons from Zuni Pueblo, New Mexico

The **Zuni Youth Enrichment Project (ZYEP)**, a youth development organization that was founded to provide recreational activities and programs for youth on the Zuni Pueblo, sought to create a permanent space for its rapidly growing programs as an approach to addressing persistent health issues among the Zuni community. Along the way, its leaders realized that empowering artists as leaders in the planning and design of the Ho'n A:wan Community Park was not only an effective and efficient way of developing, but it was also the way ZYEP itself would become more deeply rooted than it already was in the future of the Pueblo. Prior to their involvement in the CDI program, ZYEP had been successful in using programs such as summer camps and sports leagues to improve childhood health. Yet, they had to borrow space for programs and struggled to involve parents and other community members in the stewardship of these programs. As a program and service provider, ZYEP had no prior experience in the planning and development of real estate projects like the park or the engagement that these projects often require. As a result, Zuni residents were initially skeptical of ZYEP's plan to build a brand-new park.

Well-known Zuni artist and member of the Ho'n A:wan Community Park artists committee, Noreen Simpicio, working with Zuni youth during weekly art classes to create a signature art piece that highlights Zuni culture for youth and visitors. *(Joe Claunch/Zuni Youth Enrichment Project)*



Key Lessons from the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project experience

Increasing Community Influence

- Working with a committee of artists as community organizers provided a range of ways for community members to influence the park design and development process.
- The arts and cultural engagement ensured that the park would serve as a health and wellness resource by creating persistent cultural resonance with the facilities that has led to community activation of the spaces, which is often planned but not always achieved with new park projects. This has demonstrated the value that arts and culture strategies can create to address health dimensions beyond the physiological.
- The park became a valuable example for the future of how to make the process of physical development on the Pueblo more responsive to the community.

Deepening Organizational Commitment

- Artist-led community organizing leveraged culture and cultural practices to make engagement more meaningful and powerful to ZYEP and the community. As a result, ZYEP has committed to hosting artist-led committees for other efforts like their community gardens program.

The Zuni Youth Enrichment Project formed an artists' committee to co-design the planned Ho'n A:wán Community Park. This engagement strategy brought the Zuni artists' community into the process of park development, but it led to much more. The artists' committee informed the design of the park by working directly with the landscape architects. For example, they pushed the landscape architecture to be more culturally relevant by suggesting different design approaches such as the use of wood to make a traditional style of fencing for the park, and created murals and other art installations to reflect Zuni tradition, history, and teachings. The committee members also served as cultural bridges to other community residents, going door-to-door to address concerns about the park while it was being planned.

Artists operated as both spokespeople and culture bearers who involved residents in the preservation and new expression of ancient traditions. In so doing, they helped to reassure community members that the Ho'n A:wán Community Park was going to be a respectful addition to the Pueblo, and their artistic contributions made the park feel possible, permanent, and real. For ZYEP, the artists' committee that had originally been intended to engage a specific subset of the Zuni Pueblo community to inform the final design, ended up also serving community-organizing purposes.

Over the course of the park's development, the committee served as an engagement intermediary between the Zuni community and this particular project, but they also became an intermediary between traditional expectations of a cultural role and emerging needs for artists to play a civic role in community life. It is in this latter role that the artists' value as community organizers was realized. Artists are so much a normal part of community life on the Zuni Pueblo that they had been overlooked as unique and valuable stakeholders in community health and development. And conversely, in the formal expectations of civic responsibilities, artists had been underappreciated for the skills and capacities they could add to the process of community development.

According to Tom Faber, former director of the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project: "If you look at ZYEP's history, it is a history of success in learning from the community, but the community engagement processes are still evolving to put us in a better position to meet those health needs. We've made space to listen to artists and then realized that they're much more than just artists—they're parents, grandparents, teachers, cultural leaders. They have all these different roles they bring to inform our work."¹²

In particular, the capacity that artists brought to create the experience of success through arts projects was especially important to tribal leader Carleton Bowekaty, who described the implications of the park on the sense of agency among Zuni people: "Resiliency isn't always just about the grinding away at the daily life. Resilience is also about having something really successful happen despite all obstacles... being able to say, you know what you want, if you don't want to help, we'll do it ourselves."¹³

Artists created projects with both youth and adults that helped community members understand and feel their influence over the project while it was being created, as opposed to waiting for the cultural resonance of the finished park's design features to project a sense of community ownership. Joe Claunch, current director of the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project, describes how the artist committee affected his own approach to the work: "With the artists' group, there was a lot more space for listening and understanding how those traditions were facilitating health. I pay attention in a different way now, having listened to artists and how they talk about youth development and what's good for families. It's more process-oriented."¹⁴

The new park serves a functional role as a gathering space for exercise and cultural activities. These activities support a variety of outcomes both explicit to ZYEP's mission of youth development and health, but also in support of economic development and cultural expression. The engagement of, and organizing by, the artists' committee also ensured that the park serves an expressive role as a symbol of community self-determination and power. ZYEP and the artists' committee have raised expectations for community influence over physical development. While it remains to be seen whether others seeking to develop buildings and sites in the Pueblo will measure up to this new standard, the infrastructure and model for doing that now exist.

Lessons from Anchorage

A nonprofit housing organization can become so immersed in the complex, time-consuming requirements of development transactions and property management that it can lose the connection to its core values and how to put those values into practice. For **Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA)**, that realization led to a host of arts, culture, and design activities which not only engaged diverse communities in the design process and the revitalization of their home neighborhood, but also left the organization fundamentally changed. These ranged from exploratory and research-based activities, like an early project called Reclaiming Asphalt by Chad Taylor and Vania Hawkins of Intrinsic Landscapes, to public art installations, to relationship-building through storytelling projects like the collaboration with Ping Chong + Company.

As the leading affordable housing developer and operator in Anchorage, CIHA had proven itself by successfully navigating the public and community processes necessary to develop a variety of affordable housing properties around the city. In response to opportunities, market pressures, and changing demographics, CIHA began tackling new kinds of projects in ways that required new approaches to community engagement.

Effective community organizing requires trust building based on meaningful and collaborative work, as opposed to limited aspirational or hypothetical discussions, such as the exploration of micro-apartments that would be an entirely new form of housing in Anchorage. But for many affordable housing development organizations like Cook Inlet Housing Authority, navigating complex funder-imposed requirements has become a technical and highly regulated process, leaving little room for genuine community engagement. It would be unproductive to use property development as a trust-building process; trust is a precondition for starting a real estate development process, particularly when attempting to adapt or develop new types of projects. Arts and culture approaches were instrumental in helping CIHA do just that.

To overcome this mismatch of approaches, CIHA asked a set-design artist to help them create a one-to-one scale model of a micro-apartment in order to crowdsource layout design ideas from as many constituencies as possible. Those ideas would inform whether Cook Inlet Housing Authority would pursue micro-apartments in future affordable housing developments. What they learned surpassed their expectations. “While we thought we were creating a space for a layout design discussion, we realized after the first group participated that this exercise was uncovering much more,” said

Key Lessons from the Cook Inlet Housing Authority experience

Increasing Community Influence

- Local residents, policymakers, and other community members became advocates for change through artist-led engagement that had initially been intended to simply solicit their input.

Deepening Organizational Commitment

- Empowering stakeholders to solve community problems or advance community solutions deepened CIHA's commitment to organizing and community engagement, including the formation of a new Community Development Department.
- Artists helped CIHA reconnect with their Alaska Native heritage through the storytelling tradition of the Dena'ina people. This has led to their community-building leadership position in a neighborhood that includes a range of housing—affordable senior housing, workforce rental housing, and ownership condos. Artist-in-Residence Marie Acemah has worked on a narrative change effort to change the name of a street, Conquistador Drive, where one of CIHA's new affordable housing developments is planned.

Tyler Robinson, CIHA director of development finance and planning.¹⁵ The “Living Big, Living Small” project by set designer Sheila Wyne generated important discussions about the need for affordable housing, and humanized this need by asking participants to imagine how different types of residents might utilize the space of a small apartment. It led to well-designed smaller apartments and provided CIHA staff and board with the confidence to experiment with new designs. By engaging this constituency and generating a sense of ownership and empowerment, an artist intervention showed CIHA how to draw people into a development conversation and opened up genuine conversations about larger community issues.

By engaging their constituency of policymakers, builders, architects, and their own residents in a conversation about the barriers and opportunities within affordable housing, Cook Inlet Housing Authority opened up a policy pathway to creating more affordable housing despite the limitations of financing. The process also helped change the narrative that has faced housing advocates for at least a generation: the perception of affordable housing was shifted from being seen as government-provided welfare to more of a human right, one in which its consumers should have a say.

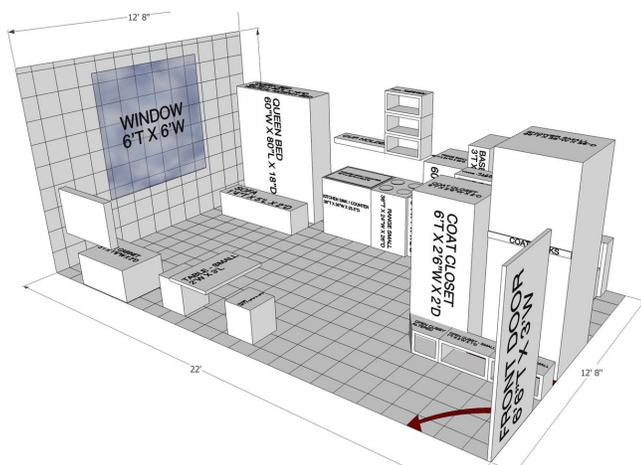
By engaging artists, the standard CIHA real estate development and community engagement processes were disrupted and reformulated. Sezy Gerow-Hanson, director of public and resident relations, describes the deepening commitment that their arts and culture-based community engagement has engendered: “We created a new community development department outside of our standard housing pipeline, so this practice has a home on the organizational chart. Our storytelling that we worked on with Ping Chong + Company

really signified to the entire organization that we were making a serious commitment to the Dena’ina oral tradition of storytelling and the importance of that in the culture of Anchorage and Alaska. Cook Inlet Housing Authority is taking responsibility as an organization that can help perpetuate Dena’ina storytelling in a different way.”¹⁶ Through the project, staff members worked with artist Ryan Conarro, education and community projects associate with the Ping Chong + Company to learn how to collect stories and conduct storytelling as a shift in their organizational culture. CIHA plans to engage a storyteller-in-residence and audio producer to launch their new podcast on KNBA, an Alaska Native-governed and operated radio station, to share the stories that they have been collecting from their residents.



By engaging their constituency of policymakers, builders, architects, and their own residents in a conversation about the barriers and opportunities within affordable housing, Cook Inlet Housing Authority opened up a policy pathway to creating more affordable housing despite the limitations of financing.

One of the Living Big, Living Small design solutions for a micro-apartment. (CIHA)



Lessons from Philadelphia

The **Fairmount Park Conservancy's (FPC)** different approaches to engagement and organizing in the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood of Philadelphia have not only increased residents' access to significant cultural assets, they have also changed the ways in which FPC relates to that community and undertakes its core activities. FPC has a long history of working with both the public sector and different communities on capital, program, and policy projects where engagement is a critical capability that they provide. As a nonprofit organization that evolved out of Philadelphia's Fairmount Park Commission, a city agency founded in 1867, FPC has responsibilities to the past, present, and future of parks in the City. Balancing community participation needs across the complexities of leading capital and historic preservation projects, supporting grassroots stewardship of 200 neighborhood parks, managing financial investments, and developing programs throughout the 10,200 acres of parks around the city had left FPC with an interest in working effectively and meaningfully with every community, but a limited capacity to explore new ways of working.

With support from the Community Development Investments program, Fairmount Park Conservancy implemented two different community engagement approaches in Strawberry Mansion. Each of these collaborations brought FPC into closer and significantly different kinds of relationships with the neighborhood's residents. FPC convened and facilitated a neighborhood advisory committee for Strawberry Mansion

Community Development Corporation and other neighborhood leadership and community members. In parallel, FPC commissioned Amber Art & Design to open up the historic Hatfield House, which is owned and managed by FPC and located in the neighborhood. Key elements of the "Community Catalyst Residency" that Amber Art & Design negotiated with FPC were:

- the primary importance of process over outcomes;
- the need for community control over programming; and
- the need for a project period of sufficient duration.

Details about how Fairmount Park Conservancy worked with Amber Art & Design through the Community Catalyst Residency can be found in the first brief in this series, *Working with Artists to Deepen Impact*.¹⁷

Amber Art & Design utilized the Hatfield House for a year-long series of arts and community programming, including hosting neighborhood advisory committee meetings. These activities created the opportunity for community members to rebuild a sense of agency over a property that had been seen as off limits during the past 10 to 15 years since it had last been occupied by Father's Day Rally, a Black male organization that held events and activities at the House. Tonnetta Graham, executive director of the Strawberry Mansion CDC remarked that "People see these historic houses in the community, and they don't feel like they're there for them."¹⁸ In fact, Graham had noted early in the CDI program that she had never even stepped foot inside the historic Hatfield House.

Key Lessons from the Fairmount Park Conservancy experience

Increasing Community Influence

- Working with Amber Art & Design, FPC developed an approach to building relationships with communities near their parks based on a reciprocity of authority and responsibility.

Deepening Organizational Commitment

- FPC reciprocated community leadership and engagement by issuing an RFP for the conceptual design of the Mander Recreation Center and campus that was only open to landscape architecture, architecture, or planning firms led by principals of color.
- New organizational strategic plan has arts and culture at its center and FPC is exploring additional opportunities to work with artists, building on the Amber Art & Design experience.

The Community Catalyst Residency activities were driven by three interlocking purposes:

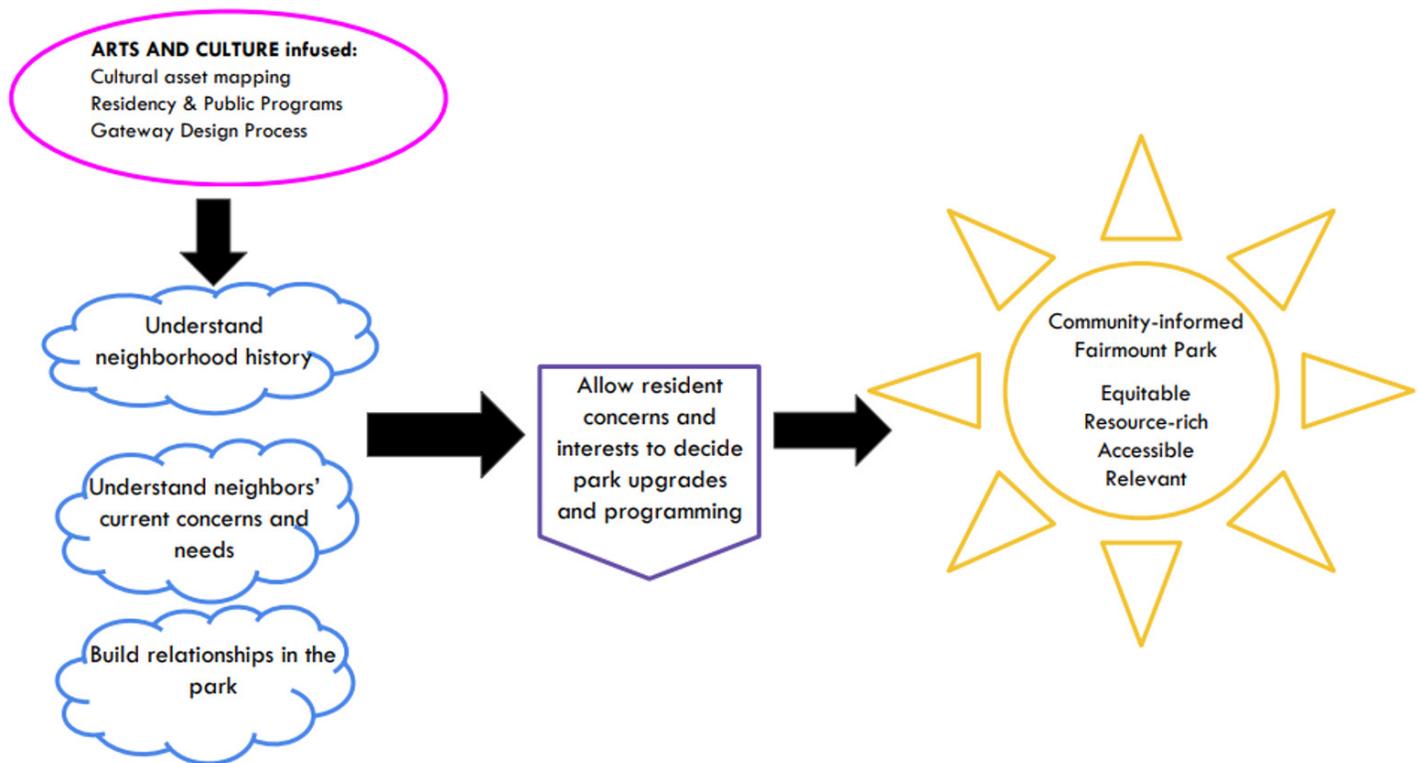
- creative expression which featured and commissioned long-time and emerging artists living in the Strawberry Mansion neighborhood;
- community curation through neighborhood liaisons; and
- economic development in the form of hiring liaisons and commissioning artists and locally sourced catering for events.

Amber Art & Design’s approach disrupted Fairmount Park Conservancy’s style of relating to the community, and they served a community-organizing role that complemented the important community engagement work of the Strawberry Mansion CDC, which had a previous relationship with FPC. Together, the three organizations, with internal support from FPC staff members Ellen Ryan and Adela Park, created meaningful relationships with neighborhood residents, and their efforts resulted in tangible community influence over a

key neighborhood asset and FPC. This citywide organization, which traditionally relied upon affluent donors and had a majority White staff, grew much closer to, and became more effective at working with, the lower income, majority Black community.

According to Fairmount Park Conservancy staff, the experience in Strawberry Mansion has helped them to better place the needs of residents at the center of their practice. The ways in which the arts and culture approaches have influenced the organization are both tactical and strategic. FPC will continue efforts to program the Hatfield House as a community cultural hub after the Community Development Investments program is over. FPC hired an artist, Francine K. Affourtit, to plan, design, and install a creative communication hub in their office space for the conservancy staff to communicate their work to one another and to the public when visiting their downtown office space. In addition, FPC required that their Strategic Plan consultants, Boost Social Sector Consulting, include an artist on their team, and the plan itself incorporates key learnings

Amber Art & Design Community Engagement and Organizing Process



Source: Amber Art & Design. “Strawberry Mansion Community Engagement: Cultural Asset Mapping and Gateway Conceptual Planning Report”(2017-2018) accessible at <http://www.amberartanddesign.com/hatfield-house>

from the Strawberry Mansion programming. Fairmount Park Conservancy has internalized the ways that arts and culture in community engagement can improve the stewardship of parks and the role of parks in neighborhood development, especially by and for low-income communities of color in Philadelphia. For a further description of FPC's internal change process evolved over the course of the CDI program, please see the brief on *How Organizations Evolve When They Embrace Arts and Culture*.¹⁹



Fairmount Park Conservancy reciprocated community leadership and engagement by issuing a request for proposals for the conceptual design of the Mander Recreation Center and campus that was only open to a landscape architecture, architecture, or planning firms led by principals of color.

Community potluck as an engagement mechanism to lift up voices and understand perspectives of neighbors by Amber Art & Design through their Community Catalyst Residency at the historic Hatfield House in Fairmount Park, Philadelphia. (Albert Yee/Fairmount Park Conservancy)



Lessons from Jackson

The **Jackson Medical Mall Foundation's (JMMF)** community development efforts were focused on inviting community members to help transform the Medical Mall from a place where health transactions happen, to a place where community members connect around holistic well-being and economic advancement. JMMF sought to meet the needs of community members more comprehensively, so that the organization could address important social determinants of health in the community and foster economic revitalization. JMMF's past experiences in community engagement were well intentioned and responsive to community needs. However, they were implemented in a top-down manner whereby JMMF organized community engagement opportunities in the neighborhood surrounding the Mall, such as clean up days, similar to the way that they provided space for health care facilities serving the community inside the Mall.

In contrast to this approach, over the course of four years with the Community Development Investments program, Jackson Medical Mall Foundation worked with arts, culture, and creative-economy small businesses by providing retail and business space as a way to attract a larger and more diverse clientele to the Mall. Each new arts and culture program, or creative small business, became another opportunity to engage the community in a bottom-up approach starting with the interests and aspirations that emerged directly from the people. JMMF also leveraged arts and culture to shift its own narrative from an organization focused solely on the medical needs of the underserved, to one that celebrated and enhanced the community's cultural assets.

Integrating arts and culture strategies resulted in fundamental self-reflection that ultimately supported the shift from JMMF as a health-care delivery facilitator and building manager, to a community development organization based on the social determinants of health. According to CEO Primus Wheeler: "The cultural asset mapping was an eye-opener for me when we got more hits on the question, 'What do you think needs to happen most in this community?' and they started to ask for more health care. We thought we were already providing more health care, but as we drilled down deeper, we found that they were needing access to health in general, and not necessarily health care."²⁰

Perhaps the most striking evolution at Jackson Medical Mall Foundation was the change from their initial proposal for the Community Development Investments program, which was for a photography-based exhibit and book project for their Boys-to-Men program, to a broader organization-wide approach. significant developments LLC, "an artist-centered company that assists clients across sectors in centering their work and identity in community narratives,"²¹ became one of their primary partners in this work. As Wheeler reflected on this evolution: "When we first got the support from ArtPlace, we had no intention of ever doing anything to totally reclaim this organization, to really restructure this organization. We never thought that would happen. We were just going to get the Boys-to-Men program going, and since that would be totally different from what we were doing, we would give it to somebody else to run and move on."²²

Key Lessons from the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation experience

Increasing Community Influence

- Artist-in-residence helps JMMF management lift up the leadership of their internal community members, in particular their employees and community-based tenants.
- In turn, these internal community members become a channel for stakeholder and community influence over JMMF operations and strategic direction.

Deepening Organizational Commitment

- JMMF creates a strategic plan for civic engagement with artist consultant daniel johnson entitled "cultural production - creative capacity strategic planning" and adopts it alongside overarching organizational strategic plan.

Community influence over the Mall and JMMF has grown as a result of the work with daniel johnson through a two-stage process. Through a contract with JMMF, daniel johnson and his team at significant developments LLC performed the role of strategic planning consultants but did so in a way that helped JMMF staff recognize that they themselves are artists and culture bearers, and had unique and valuable insights about the community and how to best engage them. The arts and culture strategy in this instance helped Jackson Medical Mall Foundation identify their internal stakeholders, which resulted in better engagement with external stakeholders. According to Mahalia Wright, vice president for arts and culture at JMMF: “We have intentionally gone out into our own neighborhoods so that the neighbors realize, ‘This is yours. You are here. We are here for you. What do you need?’ And they are, in return, asking us, ‘What do you need?’ When we bring the children to perform, they feel not only motivated, but most of them are getting self-motivated. We’re mentally tearing that fence down even before it physically comes down.”²³

Deepening organizational commitment to community engagement is meaningful for Jackson Medical Mall Foundation stakeholders and the organization’s own sense of agency. Wheeler noted that “We were saving the community from itself. And so, because [daniel johnson] guided our civic engagement process, we’re thinking now that when we come to the table, we could actually be confident that we’re going to work together with the community to get something done.”²⁴



Integrating arts and culture strategies resulted in fundamental self-reflection that ultimately supported the shift from Jackson Medical Mall Foundation as a health care delivery facilitator and building manager to a community development organization based on the social determinants of health.

Thought balloons with questions about building community were positioned to draw the interest of walkers in the Jackson Medical Mall. (*daniel johnson*)



Conclusion

Through the use of arts- and culture-based engagement and organizing, community development can reinforce its founding innovation—control and influence by local residents and other community members over the power of real estate, including development, operations, and ownership. Control and influence are central elements to making local development more equitable.

As a result of their efforts to integrate arts and culture strategies, these organizations opened themselves up to being truly influenced by community members in ways that they had not been before. They listened more intently, and they responded to what they heard and learned. It was a mutually advantageous collaboration between artists and community development organizations: many artists can produce innovative community engagement but do not know how to plug into the systems of change in their communities. Community developers knew how to promote transformation, but they were missing the tools and capacity to engage people in creative ways.

The power of arts and culture to make engagement efforts more expressive, tangible, and lasting is the key to this integration. Though artistic activism has a long history in civil rights and environmental justice organizing, the potential for these forms of thoughtfully managed creative activity to lead to positive change has only recently been recognized in the community development field. Deep organizing is not a short-term activity, and both leadership development and physical improvements to these institutions will take years of attention, persistence, and commitment. Arts and culture efforts in community engagement can accelerate the leadership development and physical improvements by combining elements of both.

These arts and culture experiments in engagement and organizing have generated authentic relationships that are grounded in a new level of listening and responsiveness. Each of the six organizations has implemented internal changes that have made them more representative of, and responsible for, the community's vision of its own development.²⁵

The collaboration of artists and cultural workers with community developers is a useful starting point for safeguarding arts and culture strategies so that they are not co-opted or exploited by purposes that do not reflect the values of a community. The collaborations, when well-conceived and equitably managed, are proving to be smarter, more sustainable, and more grounded than either artists or community developers could produce while working separately.

Community-based social practice and civic practice artists, as well as culture bearers and culture workers with a community development focus, can be especially attentive to the needs of people. They let relationship processes drive the art and products that they create. These are the kinds of practitioners who can most add value to engagement and organizing efforts. Their skills and sensibilities can be taught, and there is a growing number of such practitioners who are capable of blending their creativity and commitment with a substantial understanding of social change and communities.

The story is only beginning to unfold. Continued attention to the work of these six Community Development Investments program participant organizations will ascertain the longer term influence of a range of strategies on community development outcomes, from the perspective of residents' sense of agency and influence over development, to the social cohesion of neighborhoods and towns, to tangible changes in the health and well-being of residents, and the quality of the places where they live.

Notes

- 1 This spectrum of levels of interaction is often described using the metaphor of a ladder of citizen participation. The ladder's lowest rungs are Manipulation and Therapy (aka "Nonparticipation"), the middle rungs are Informing, Consultation, and Placation (aka "Tokenism"), and the top rungs are Partnership, Delegated Power, and Citizen Control (aka "Citizen Power"). Compared to this participation ladder, community engagement is generally analogous to the middle rungs; lower rungs are the realm of community outreach processes; higher rungs are the outcome of community organizing. The original formulation is from Sherry R. Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.
- 2 M. Barnes and P. Schmitz, "Community Engagement Matters (Now More Than Ever)," *Stanford Social Innovation Review*, Spring 2016, https://ssir.org/articles/entry/community_engagement_matters_now_more_than_ever#.
- 3 Sherry R. Arnstein, "A Ladder of Citizen Participation," *Journal of the American Planning Association*, Vol. 35, No. 4, July 1969, pp. 216-224.
- 4 S. D. Alinsky, *Rules for Radicals: A Practical Primer for Realistic Radicals* (New York: Vintage Books, 1971).
- 5 Efforts like Animating Democracy, a program of Americans for the Arts, and the Community Arts Engagement Minor program at Otis College of Art and Design reflect in their curricula broad recognition of the value of arts and culture and artists in community engagement.
- 6 See also, Jeremy Liu and Lorrie Chang, "Outcomes in Communities of Arts and Cultural Strategies: The Role of Organizing and Engagement," *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, November 13, 2019, <https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/publications/community-development-investment-review/2019/november/outcomes-in-communities-of-arts-and-cultural-strategies-the-role-of-organizing-and-engagement/>.
- 7 The Strengthening and Connecting to Community Social Fabric brief is forthcoming and will be accessible at www.communitydevelopment.art.
- 8 This brief will be accessible at www.communitydevelopment.art.
- 9 "Transforming Community Development through Arts and Culture," *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, November 13, 2019, <https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/publications/community-development-investment-review/2019/november/transforming-community-development-through-arts-and-culture/>.
- 10 Grant Sunoo, interview with author as part of +LAB Residency Selection Panel, January 15, 2019.
- 11 Little Tokyo Service Center, +LAB Residency Artist Program, <https://www.ltsc.org/artist-residency-program/>
- 12 Tom Faber, in dialogue with Lorrie Chang of PolicyLink in session at CDI R&D convening, Los Angeles, February 21, 2019.
- 13 Carleton Bowekaty, interview with Lorrie Chang of PolicyLink, October 2, 2018.
- 14 Joe Claunch, in dialogue with Lorrie Chang of PolicyLink in session at CDI R&D convening, Los Angeles, February 21, 2019.
- 15 Tyler Robinson, describing the experience of creating "Living Big, Living Small," on the Arts, Culture, and Community Development website, <https://communitydevelopment.art/communities/cook-inlet/living-big-living-small>.
- 16 Sezy Gerow-Hanson, in dialogue with Alexis Stephens of PolicyLink in session at CDI R&D convening, Los Angeles, February 21, 2019.
- 17 See Alexis Stephens, *Working with Artists to Deepen Impact* (Oakland: PolicyLink, 2019), accessible at www.communitydevelopment.art.
- 18 Alexis Stephens and Victor Rubin, "What Happens When Parks and Artists Partner to Advance Equity," *Parks & Recreation* magazine, December 7, 2018.
- 19 Victor Rubin, *How Organizations Evolve When They Embrace Arts and Culture* (Oakland: PolicyLink, April 2020), accessible at www.communitydevelopment.art.
- 20 "Leading Change: Reflections from Chief Executives of CDI Organizations," *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, November 13, 2019, <https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/publications/community-development-investment-review/2019/november/leading-change-reflections-from-chief-executives-of-cdi-organizations/>.
- 21 daniel johnson, "Arts and Culture from the Inside, Not Just on the Outside" *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, November 13, 2019, <https://www.frbsf.org/community-development/publications/community-development-investment-review/2019/november/arts-and-culture-from-the-inside-not-just-on-the-outside/>.
- 22 "Leading Change: Reflections from Chief Executives of CDI Organizations," *Community Development Innovation Review*.
- 23 Mahalia Wright, in dialogue with Victor Rubin of PolicyLink in session at CDI R&D convening, Los Angeles, February 21, 2019.
- 24 "Leading Change: Reflections from Chief Executives of CDI Organizations," *Community Development Innovation Review*.
- 25 More detail about these organizational changes can be found in Victor Rubin, *How Organizations Evolve When They Embrace Arts and Culture* (Oakland:PolicyLink, April 2020), accessible at www.communitydevelopment.art.

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Main cover photo: Cook Inlet Housing Authority.

Small cover photos top to bottom: Lyz Crane, Jackson Medical Mall Foundation; Zuni Youth Enrichment Project; Ashley Hanson, Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership; Rudy Espinoza, Little Tokyo Service Center; Albert Yee, Fairmount Park Conservancy.

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