



## **The Art of Designing More Livable Neighborhoods**

**Curator:** Tom Borrup

**Listener:** Juan Carrillo

**Recorder:** Anika Selhorst

### **Strategies**

- Discover and inventory what is present and valued in a neighborhood (architectural, historical, spiritual social, commercial) and build on that. Engage everyone in questions of what is valued.
- Include artists from the beginning, along with others including longtime residents, who will keep the spirit of the place central in planning.
- Expect and allow time and respect for contentiousness in the process.
- Design buildings, transportation, public art, landscaping, signage to give expression to the identity of the place. Consider designing entry points to the neighborhood that give identity.
- Consider the experiential life of the residents, include projects that build community and break down social barriers—festivals, shared spaces, community gardens, memorial spaces, flea markets, etc.
- Consider the support institutions, government services, financial institutions—and create such institutions if need be. Establish tax credits to keep old businesses and attract new.
- Consider the role of the school as a way to engage parental activity in the community.

## **Connecting the Dots: Values, Resources and Community Action**

**Curator Team:** Jeanne Butler, Shelley Cohn, Sara Solotaroff, Anne Focke, Brenda Biernet

**Listener:** Jim Clark

**Recorder:** Robin Iten Porter

### **Strategies**

#### **Grantmakers must:**

- Remember the importance of “speculative” grants, by supporting risk taking and cutting edge work.
- “Seek out the soft voices” in communities. Find those with ‘soft voices’ and give them the microphone... We speak about fairness and equity; don’t forget equality
- Go beyond the rules and past patterns to support what is really of importance, like giving a grant to a for-profit organization because it proposed to fulfill a community need.
- Remember that building public value begins from where your audience is listening.

#### **Grantees must:**

- Maintain communications regularly, not just at times of need; engage elected officials in ways which reflect the politicians concerns.
- Develop innovative and/or alternative ways of reporting program results...one local arts agency asks grantees to appear at County Commission meetings (3 to 5 minute reports) which are also broadcast on local cable TV.
- Seek out partnerships with non-arts agencies to expand outreach and funding: with Convention and Visitors Bureaus, Community Development Agencies and other non-arts organizations that might be interested in forging partnerships with artists and arts organizations.
- Include “nay-sayers” in your planning process. Ask everyone, “who aren’t we listening to?”
- Examine the composition of, and responsibilities of your Board of Directors – are they active agents for aligning the goals of the grantmakers, grantees and the communities they serve?
- Allow time. A new culture for grantmaking is evolving, with new priorities and concerns, and this takes time.
- Consider that there may be a shift from focus on the supply side (artists, arts organizations) to the demand side (the general public).

## From Apathy and Inertia to Imagination and Action: Making Democracy Work

**Curator:** Caron Atlas and Kinshasha Holman Conwill

**Listener:** Julie Numbers Smith

**Recorder:** Marit Dewhurst

### Strategies

- Create and use art space as civic space: use theaters as public forums, use museums as a forum to educate and register voters, use festivals as a place to dialogue about relevant issues.
- Art is not about Art, it is about something that is meaningful and moving – use it as a language to express the issues around matters such as poverty, affordable housing, gentrification, youth crime, neighborhood vitality, racial discrimination
  - Create reflective street theater pieces around local dialogue and interviews and perform the pieces outside the traditional theater setting – make it 30 minutes and include an interactive session
  - Paint murals that express a relevant and current issue or about a historical issue that still informs the present
- Do a call-to-artists to create images that are relevant to a political message or statement
- Arts organizations can build relationships and collaborative efforts with activist groups or non-arts social agencies or groups
- Circulate petitions about cultural policy
- Arts gatherings should integrate dialogue about political issues that lead to the understanding of the language and culture
- Train current and future artists to use their art form as a community catalyst, e.g. how to build community, how to engage community, how to leverage their energy into activist agendas. Community engagement is a skill, develop training and curriculum especially for artists
- Use the media and technology as a vehicle to express messages and reach diverse audiences – action is just a click away
- Don't forget that you, as an arts administrator, are in a powerful position to be the bridge, convener and translator among artists, the creative process and the more political, commercial, linear worlds

- Form cross-pollinated partnerships – between profit and nonprofit, arts and non-arts, professional and non-professional, ethnic and non-ethnic, social focused and arts focused, etc.
- Effective advocacy is rooted in real, human, very personal stories – by capturing the emotion and pure humanity in how effective the arts have been in someone’s life THEN the other justifications such as economic development, education and whole child/whole citizen, cultural tourism can follow
- Create a database of case studies and make available to practitioners
- Seek broader community benefit from private development projects; work with architects and community planners and join in on the charrettes already happening. Include artists, educators and architects in community building projects

### **Principles and Considerations**

- Create a proactive “invitation” for engagement: apathy does not really exist – everyone cares about something: find that something, find that language
- Images and storytelling are some of the most effective forms of teaching/learning
- Imagine the future and fight FOR something not against
- Engaging in political and community change is a commitment for the long-haul and requires constant vigilance
- Arts, as a level playing ground for communication, can convey the messages of personal empowerment (that your vote counts, that you can make a difference, that change can happen through the political process)
- Artist Fear issue: community engagement does not compromise art-making, in fact, it may enhance it
- Artist Fear issue: How can I eat if I take a stand?
- Organization Fear issue: 501c3 status does not mean advocacy and education should not be a part of your work
- How can divergent forms of the arts (commercial, Christian, youth-oriented) integrate to the advantage of everyone
- Objective: transform your audience from spectator to observer to protagonist

## **Bridging Differences, Building Tolerance, and Creating Connections Among Communities**

**Curator:** Abel Lopez

**Listener:** Maryo Ewell

**Recorder:** Greta Willis

### **Strategies**

- Be up front with partners in your cross-cultural exchanges about the philosophical frameworks behind your work.
- Make outreach integral to the core mission and not a special conversation or special program.
- Determine whether your arts event is designed to help build a stronger identity (ie, something primarily internal for a cultural group) or to help someone from one culture understand another culture. The answer to this question will inform everything from venue to mode of presentation to prospective collaborating co-sponsors
- Remember that presenting the art of another culture is not enough...work toward ongoing dialogue and programmatic long-term plans with partners who can continue the cultural dialogue. Institutionalize this effort of ongoing dialogue within your organization and work toward getting the investment of your staff and board.
- A process of building cultural exchange collaboration must engage other community groups such as churches, fraternal organizations, social service and housing groups, and local government.
- Celebrate the differences among collaborators and remember that this is an ongoing dialogue about meanings.
- “A forced marriage does not lead to dialogue!”
- Understanding requires a series of steps: exposure, deeper experience (context, values, vocabulary), questioning and deep listening, dialogue, and ultimately living together well with deep trust and appreciation. Does your event lead to the next step?
- To genuinely enter into dialogue you have to be willing to be uncomfortable, challenged, perhaps ultimately changed. How can you/your organization prepare yourselves for this?
- Incorporate a folklorist in planning for a cultural event – they are specialists in building community connections
- Consider taking an art form and sharing that form in different cultural ways. For instance, take the same type of drum and share it with different cultures to see how it is used differently or how people from different cultures can perceive the same “thing” differently

**Community Involvement in Education:  
How can we help arts education enhance community involvement?**

**Curator:** Christine Goodheart

**Listener:** Dawn Ellis

**Recorder:** Alyson Ekblom

**Strategies**

- Honor the voice of the young person
  - *Ask and Listen* to young people and their parents
  - Empower the leaders of tomorrow by putting youth on your boards and planning commissions and including them as advocates when talking with legislators
  - Articulate a path for students to move up through the ranks: students teaching students and adults and students becoming teaching artists
- Provide youth with ways to answer: “What’s next for me?”
  - Arts education organizations should connect with other arts learning organizations, to provide easy access for students for other arts opportunities and entry into the professional world
  - In an ever-changing world, instill in students the permanence of your arts program or institution and other learning opportunities
  - Provide scholarships to continue learning
- Make parents central to arts learning priorities.
  - Engage in *Constant Vigilance* to get in touch with and involve them
  - Build long-term commitment by giving parents a sense of ownership
  - Invite parents into learning and performance opportunities as participants
  - Provide food, free transportation, free parking, and flexibility
  - Empower them to engage in the political system
- Locate your arts organization strategically.
  - Locate your organization in the center of the community being served
  - Artistically enhance your external work environment for example paint the park benches near your office
  - Be permeable – bring the community in, go into the community – till boundaries are seamless
- Create a strong and diverse network of advocates for youth
  - Cultivate mutual respect
  - Nurture ongoing relationships with individuals and organizations that are or could be committed to youth issues
  - Organize these networks to become political about school quality, inclusion of arts, community life.
  - Politically support the reinstatement of arts specialists in the schools

- Communicate strategically about the importance of your arts education program
  - Synthesize your story skillfully, ground it in data and emotion.
  - Use multi-media such as a video by a teaching artist highlighting young voices or a PSA, press, etc.
  - Know your message; prepare the “elevator” speech:
    - who you are,
    - what you do with others,
    - quote evaluation numbers,
    - tell anecdote,
    - link to research,
    - invite to action
- Refine organizational structures to serve the mission.
  - Vertically integrate professionals, amateurs, youth, adults
  - Ensure every staff member feels s/he can be an ambassador to other organizations
  - Select partnerships based on what’s best for youth and mission
- Make evaluation an institutional habit of mind. Evaluate:
  - Self-esteem
  - Community participation
  - Civic pride
  - Positive engagement
- Expand the definition of and commitment to professional development beyond professionals to include parents, students, aides, support staff, volunteers, activists, political leaders, facilities staff, as well as teachers, administrators, artists, arts organization managers.

## Changing the Frame: Valuing the Economic Role of the Arts in Communities

**Curator:** Steven Wolff

**Listener:** Marialaura Leslie

**Recorder:** Amy A. Ford

### Strategies

- Develop new economic arts measurements that speak the language of business and government and that take into account the importance of redefining the investment argument.
- Realistically assess one's community by engaging in conversations with diverse members and asking "What can we do for you?"
- Cultivate and engage new partners by focusing on external constituencies as well as internal ones.
- Inventory the local stakeholders and authorizers for the arts/culture and community/economic development sectors in your community.
- Join local, regional, and state business associations and/or committees.
- Create a local arts and the economy taskforce for stakeholders
- Create global positioning system mapping of the arts/culture in a given community that will lead to the creation of an arts/culture atlas (for example, Portland, OR).
- Educate artists, arts administrators, arts advocates, etc., in citizenship efforts. Get involved in your community.
- Visit presenter websites and use the information to inform your board, arts councils, arts organizations, and other stakeholders on the innovative work that is already being done in communities. Give your board homework.
- Take immediate steps to change the role of the arts in your community by evaluating existing relationships, crafting a message, and dedicating resources to the work.
- Be inclusive by finding stakeholders where you may not expect to. For example, include for-profit arts organizations in your community.
- Be prepared to answer why? It is extremely important that, regardless of what arts and economic initiative is chosen by a community, the purpose for all its stakeholders is clear and well defined.
- Honor the authenticity of what makes each community unique.

- How? Collaborate, Connect, Challenge, and Commit.
  - **Collaboration:** building relationships that are authentic, intrinsic, and knowing. Collaboration also acknowledges the existing assets in a community and works to build on them. The language associated with this theme included "knowing," "multiple goals," and "crossing borders."
  - **Connect:** working with the keepers of economic vitality in any community, especially city councils or other public decision-making bodies.
  - **Challenge:** do not exist solely in the comfortable realm of conventional wisdom, and learn to leverage your economic research arguments.
  - **Commitment:** the importance of dedicating oneself fully to whatever process or vision identified. Patience and flexibility are the hallmarks of this theme.