



# THE FIELD GUIDE

FOR PARKS AND  
CREATIVE PLACEMAKING

THE TRUST FOR PUBLIC LAND  
& CITY PARKS ALLIANCE

# FIELD GUIDE FOR CREATIVE PLACEMAKING IN PARKS

by **Matthew Clarke**



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# FIELD GUIDE FOR CREATIVE PLACEMAKING IN PARKS

by **Matthew Clarke**

forward by  
**Lily Yeh**

produced by  
**The Trust for Public Land &  
City Parks Alliance**



## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Creative placemaking, as a field, has matured over the past decade. The work presented in this book is thanks to the committed people across the country who have invested in their communities and used the arts to do so.

This monograph was made possible by a number of organizations and individuals. The staff of the two primary institutions have worked on this document and the underlying research for over two years. The Trust for Public Land's Matthew Clarke, Adrian Benepe, Nette Compton, Richard Lukas, Sally Sand, and Eliza Sarasohn and the City Parks Alliance's Catherine Nagel, Angelina Horn, and Tom McCann were instrumental in realizing this publication. Special thanks to John Ceglarek and Bianca Shulaker from The Trust for Public Land for their extraordinary efforts to support this guide.

A steering committee has supported this work for well over a year. The committee is made up of Lyz Crane from Artplace America, Ignacio Bunster-Ossa from AECOM, David Rouse from the American Planning Association, Shawn Balon from the American Society of Landscape Architects, Lily Yeh from Barefoot Artists, and Patricia Walsh from Americans for the Arts.

Interviews with leaders of each case study project provided insightful lessons and details. Interviews were conducted with Jason Roberts, Anne Olson, Carlo Perlo, Toody Maher, Lucas Cowan, Truman Tolefree, David Leinster, Caroline O'Boyle, Nicole Crutchfield, Aviva Kapust, and Michael Samuelian, among others from the staffs of each organizations.

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**Dear Park Advocate,**

Whether an iconic island park in New York's harbor or a community garden space in Fargo, parks have long been a symbol of, and influence on, public culture and wellbeing. Public parks have a dynamic relationship with the communities they serve; the places we protect can resemble anywhere or they can tell the stories of our collective history and values, the process we use to make decisions can exclude or empower neighborhoods, the way we design parks can promote or hinder diversity of use, and the activity of a park can be limited or rich in encouraging our physical health and expression of our democratic ideals. The literature about the role of public space, in particular parks, in the formation and reflection of culture and community is rich, and one that makes the connections between our parks, arts and culture, and community development essential to purposefully explore.

Mirroring the goals that many parks professionals have for their projects, "creative placemaking" can help animate space, rejuvenate infrastructure, improve public safety, and bring a community together to celebrate, inspire, and be inspired. In 2010, a white paper by Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa defined creative placemaking as the practice in which "partners from public, private, non-profit, and community sectors strategically shape the physical and social character of a neighborhood, town, city, or region around arts and cultural activities." This idea of partnerships, strategic intervention, and the focus on the arts and culture as a rallying point for discussion and decision-making can help create stronger, healthier parks for generations to come.

At The Trust for Public Land and City Parks Alliance, we have seen this practice explored with varying degrees of intentionality. Experimentation with different strategies, partnerships, and mediums has continued to evolve over time. In interviews and reflection on these projects, key elements to success emerged: a commitment to early inclusion of artists, a meaningful dialogue with communities, and an openness to allowing outcomes to emerge from the process. This practice has become more purposeful over time, and this *Field Guide* represents an effort to work cross-disciplinarily to advance the use of creative placemaking in parks.

We strongly believe that creating this *Field Guide*, like the implementation of the work it describes, requires soliciting input from a wide spectrum of voices. Generously funded by the National En-

dowment for the Arts, The Trust for Public Land and City Parks Alliance held a "Creative Placemaking in Parks" colloquium in June 2016. This two-day event in Philadelphia brought together parks department leadership, artists, landscape architects, decision-makers, and community advocates to discuss the value, best practices, challenges, and next steps for implementing parks projects that integrate creative placemaking as a key to achieving high quality outputs and impacts.

We believe the reflection on the meaning and adoption of creative placemaking that took place at this colloquium, and during subsequent investigation and meetings, was an important step in developing a comprehensive viewpoint and framework for how we create quality parks that holistically enrich the communities they serve.

This guide provides a framework for the application of creative placemaking in the parks world. Almost limitless possibilities for the implementation of this work exist. There is an important role for you to play in this practice, whether you work for a parks department, are an elected official, or are a resident. As such, this resource is meant to be accessible and inspirational for a wide cross-section of people interested in parks and community development.

It is well recognized that the understanding of "creative placemaking" varies widely – from artists who engage with communities and societal questions throughout their practice, to park planners who have been incorporating aspects of this work unknowingly, to those who are hearing the term for the first time. This Creative Placemaking in Parks Field Guide is the first step in providing information and case studies, and the goal is to expand this work to create interactive, knowledge-building communities around the topics detailed here. As this practice continues to evolve, so too will the resources to guide and inform the field.

Sincerely,



**Adrian Benepe,**

*SVP, Director of Parks for  
People  
The Trust for Public Land*



**Catherine Nagel,**

*Executive Director  
City Parks Alliance*

# FORWARD

LILY YEHL, ARTIST

FOUNDER OF VILLAGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES  
FOUNDER/DIRECTOR OF BAREFOOT ARTISTS

As our lives become overcrowded with digital distractions and our cities become ever more densely congested with buildings, vehicles, and people, our parks and open spaces become needed ways to breath, a relief from the stress of urban living. Yet, despite the desperate need for open urban space, many unattended or abandoned places emanate indifference or even danger, which discourages people from using them and is a waste of precious land for the community.

**A simple way to change a passive, indifferent, or threatening space into a welcoming, nurturing, and inspiring place is through the presence of art. Art in public places can lift us from the mundane into the realm of imagination. Art can remind us what is important to our existence through playfulness or poetry. Art can surprise us by its honesty or inspire us by its daring. Art can help us envision what is possible; it can prod us to dream and act.**

The most empowering public art comes from the envisioning of the community itself. When the process of creating public art engages people in the neighborhood in a sensitive and genuine manner, it can be profoundly transformative. In our fragmented and deeply wounded society, the healing capacity of an inclusive, respectful, and community-based art-making process cannot be over emphasized.

Making art in public places is like making a great community hearth. It brings people, family, friends, and strangers together to enjoy, connect, and celebrate. I rejoice in the timely publication of the *Field Guide for Creative Placemaking in Parks*. Through its guidance, may the light of creativity spread and may the art making in parks and open spaces bring harmony and joy to our land.

# HOW TO USE THIS FIELD GUIDE

This *Field Guide* is intended to promote the use of creative placemaking in parks and open spaces.

## But what exactly is creative placemaking?

Creative placemaking is a term that describes the practice of using the arts as a tool for community development. The National Endowment for the Arts (NEA), which was instrumental in defining this practice, went so far as to write an entire book about it. It opens with the following questions:

**So you're a mayor who wants to make your city better, or you're a resident of a neighborhood where development is out of control, or you work at a community development organization and are trying to improve the plaza where kids play and folks meet up, or you work in a small town and want to improve Main Street, or you work in a planning or economic development office and are trying to find new ways to engage the public in a project. Since you care about making your place better, you follow the current thinking in planning and community development, and you've been hearing a new term—creative placemaking. What is that, you say? Something about the arts? You love the arts, but what do the arts have to do with making your place better? You want to know how to do creative placemaking.**

This document is intended to answer those questions for people who would like to use creative placemaking in making the parks and open spaces that serve our communities.

The Trust for Public Land and the City Parks Alliance work tirelessly to ensure that parks are seen as a first-tier community service, like utilities and public safety, and that every American has access to a quality park or open space. At its core, this right to access is grounded in a belief that parks serve as cultural assets; they speak to our need for beauty, recreation, socialization, and health. Creative placemaking is a natural bedfellow with this intent, and it can help make for more prosperous parks—and communities – across the country.

## 10 EXAMPLES OF CREATIVE PLACEMAKING IN PARKS

- 1 **Commission a piece of environmental art in a waterfront to illustrate the challenges of sea level rise.**
- 2 *Help build a “friends of” group that helps to produce regular concerts and art activities in public spaces.*
- 3 *Bring an artist onto a design team to offer creative ways to ask questions about what a community wants.*
- 4 Collaborate with a fabrication lab to teach local kids how to build by co-creating temporary pavilions or play structures.
- 5 **Work with a local radio station to capture oral histories of residents who live around a community park so that its renovation is designed to reflect the stories of that place.**
- 6 In a neighborhood park stage, produce a piece of theater that visualizes some of the lived experiences of people in that community.
- 7 *Work with a photographer to document an abandoned rail line to demonstrate the potential of a linear bike trail and park.*
- 8 *Hire a sculptor to design historical murals for a small city’s parks, creating a network of visual experiences that tell the story of that community.*
- 9 Embed visual elements into green infrastructure that help explain how passive systems can help prevent stormwater runoff.
- 10 **Support an artist-led community organizing process that focuses on park safety and public governance.**

# INTRODUCTION



This book is intended to serve as an introduction to creative placemaking for those interested in using the practice to create more and better parks in their community. It is geared towards the practitioner who has some awareness that the idea exists but needs a tool to learn more about it and to apply those lessons to a real-world example.

This resource will accomplish two things. First, it will answer the foundational questions of, “What is creative placemaking?” and, “How does creative placemaking make for better parks?” Secondly, it will help to connect the readers to other, more detailed resources that can help them execute their projects with precision and local specificity. These resources will be noted throughout the publication.

The Field Guide is divided into three sections. The first section defines, in the simplest way, creative placemaking as it applies to parks and open spaces. The second section outlines what could be a typical process for creative placemaking, all the while noting that these processes are rarely anything but typical. This section provides for a very loose framework to assist in the planning and implementation of these creative, forward-looking projects. The third section describes in detail 11 case studies of parks and open spaces that have deployed creative placemaking. While these projects are organized by type of park and space, the content is uniquely focused less on the end product and more on the processes and internal challenges of each example.



The 606 Block Party. 2016. Source: Adam Alexander, courtesy of The Trust for Public Land.

## DEFINITION OF CREATIVE PLACEMAKING AND PARKS

1. Community development is defined as a “process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems.” “Community Development,” *The United Nations Terminology Database* (UNTERM), United Nations, accessed June 12, 2017, //www.unterm.un.org/.

2. Two resources are useful for understanding place-based development and placemaking. The first is [The Federal Reserve of San Francisco’s article, “Place-Based Initiative.”](#) *Community Investments* 22, no. 1, Laura Choi, ed. Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco (2010): 2-8, //http://www.frbsf.org/community-development/files/Spring\_CI\_2010a.pdf; and, [The Project for Public Spaces “Placemaking 101”](#) online resource is more focused on public space planning, but has important content. “Placemaking 101” *Project for Public Spaces*, accessed June 12, 2017, //https://www.pps.org/reference/reference-categories/placemaking-tools/.

**Creative placemaking for parks is a cooperative, community-based process that uses arts and cultural expression to create or rejuvenate parks and open spaces, thus deepening a sense of place and inspiring community pride.**

Creative placemaking’s two words can help us understand the term and the practice.

“Placemaking” refers to a concept that can be complicated and academic, but refers most simply to the things that bind us to the places we live and work. People who work in community development,<sup>1</sup> whether as residents or professionals, often subdivide their work according to a discipline, such as transportation policy or affordable housing. “Placemaking” suggests another way of thinking: that community development should focus first and foremost on a holistic understanding of place. In this sense, a neighborhood group will ask questions like, “What city services do we need and how do those services interrelate?” A city planner would ask, “How can I provide more affordable housing around transit-rich neighborhoods, and then how can I locate social services around these new hubs?” These people are thinking about place first, and policies second.<sup>2</sup>

“Creative” refers to the practice of using the arts to advance community development. This idea is not new; arts

have, for centuries, been associated with how we have built and imagined our cities. For example, a Renaissance prince installs a sculpture in the main plaza to demonstrate power. Or, after the 1929 stock market crash, artists are employed to paint spirit-raising murals of America's industriousness.

“Creative,” in today's sense, has a strong relationship to this “place-based” thinking mentioned above. In today's global information-based economy, place means more. Words like “authentic” and “local” have economic and cultural value. Because of this emphasis on thinking about place, the arts and culture have an important job: they bind us to place. Imagine all the things you remember about a childhood home or a favorite destination. More than likely, there are examples of culture in those memories, such as a traditional holiday meal or a spectacular musical theater performance.

This power to connect the idea of place with culture allows for those interested in community development to leverage that relationship. “Creative” thinking about place elevates all those cultural activities, places, and ideas and makes them essential to community change. Culture also provides a platform to talk about complex community issues within a forum that is less divisive. A community meal gives neighbors a chance to talk about housing issues without the fraught environment of a city council hearing or a zoning meeting. An outdoor jazz festival helps bring people together to think about the renovation of an important gathering space.

Together, these two words—creative placemaking—leverage our innate connection to culture, from traditional meals to church choirs to crocheting clubs, to address important community development goals. This approach understands that culture binds us to place and to one another, and by prioritizing culture ahead of more divisive

**Together, these two words—creative placemaking—leverage our innate connection to culture, from traditional meals to church choirs to crocheting clubs, to address important community development goals.**

political issues, we can entertain conversations about community change in ways that are balanced, nuanced, and respectful.<sup>3</sup>

## WHY CREATIVE PLACEMAKING AND PARKS?

3. The **National Endowment for the Arts** produced an important monograph about creative placemaking that gives more information about the practice, its history, and its application. More information here: <https://www.arts.gov/news/2016/how-do-creative-placemaking>

Creative placemaking, thus defined, can be deployed as part of nearly any community development goal. Just as transit planners can incorporate the arts in their activation of key corridors or public health experts can use the arts to make meaningful changes to mental health challenges, so too can creative placemaking have value to the design, construction, and stewardship of parks and open spaces.

The Trust for Public Land and the City Parks Alliance jointly see creative placemaking as integral to the delivery of effective parks and open space, which will ensure healthy, livable communities. Given the multiple benefits that parks provide, city and county governments should see them as a first-tier city service. Everyone should have the opportunity to connect with parks and open spaces, as they provide multiple benefits to the physical, environmental, social, and economic health of a community. As its most essential function, creative placemaking empowers communities, especially those most vulnerable, to have a voice in shaping their neighborhood parks.

**The goal of creative placemaking in parks is to:**

1. Strengthen the role of parks and open space as an integrated part of **comprehensive community development**.
2. Advance **arts- and culturally-based approaches** in park making, thereby creating social connections within and between communities.
3. Foreground the role of parks as **cultural products** unto themselves, as important sites for civic gathering and activity.
4. Foster **innovation, design excellence, and beauty** in community parks and open spaces.

As these show, the intersection of creative placemaking is characterized by processes, not a product. Many

confuse public art and creative placemaking. Although it can serve as an important ingredient in a placemaking process, public art needs other ingredients (community engagement, organization building, community planning, etc.) to be meaningfully described as placemaking.

Luckily, parks, as cultural sites, are exceptional places to test creative placemaking practices. Park professionals across the country already do so as a natural part of their work. This *Field Guide* intends to make these opportunities even easier to execute and with even more impact on our communities.

## COMPONENTS OF A CREATIVE PLACEMAKING PROJECT

Even so defined, creative placemaking can feel imprecise and confusing to implement. What is and is not creative placemaking? As a helpful outline, one way to think about creative placemaking is as a multistep process. The following outline, adapted here to refer to parks, was created by ArtPlace America, the nation's only creative placemaking-focused foundation.<sup>4</sup> This four step process, or checklist, is a helpful first step for any practitioner looking to pursue a creative placemaking project.

The case studies in the *Field Guide* are organized around this four-part structure. They will help make these steps more digestible and less abstract.

4. “**ArtPlace America** (ArtPlace) is a ten-year collaboration among a number of foundations, federal agencies, and financial institutions that works to position arts and culture as a core sector of comprehensive community planning and development in order to help strengthen the social, physical, and economic fabric of communities.” For more, see: [www.artplaceamerica.org/](http://www.artplaceamerica.org/).



Underpass Park. Source: Nicola Betts. 2016, Digital Image.

## FOUR STEPS



**A. Define a community based on geography, such as a block, neighborhood, city, or region.**

Whatever the initiative, project, or idea, it should be associated with a clearly defined geographic area. While this area can vary in scale – from a region to a city block, it is important to consider all the people who live in that place and their histories, identities, and system. For parks, this geography might be defined by the most appropriate user group: a neighborhood for a community park or an entire region for a large youth sports complex.



**B. Articulate a change the group of people living and working in that community would like to see.**

With that geography defined, the next step is to articulate goals and outcomes that a group of people living and working in that geography would like to see. This change should be defined by those that will be impacted by the project. That change should be something that a park can help address, such as stormwater overflow or community cohesion.



**C. Propose an arts-based intervention to help achieve that change.**

In the third step, after identifying the area of focus and the change, you need to design an arts-based intervention to help bring about that change. This kind of strategy will leverage the arts' natural ability to engage with people, to clarify complex issues, and to help reveal new opportunities.



**D. Develop a way to know whether the change has occurred.**

A part of designing effective interventions is having a clear idea about how you will know whether the arts-based intervention addressed the desired change for the people in the place identified. It is important to know how you will do this at the outset to help you determine at the end if you should stop doing something, do more of the same thing, or do something differently in the future.

# ARTS-BASED STRATEGY

Based on the structure below, this Field Guide organizes the execution of that arts-based strategy according to a process, described below. While the narrative herein is linear, most projects will follow a unique schedule and structure. This structure aims to provide a reference that can be flexible to different needs and contexts.

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## 1. Imagining & Framing

This section describes how project stakeholders decide what goals and outcomes are important to the parks-based arts project and what strategies and tactics should be used to help make sure those outcomes occur.

## 2. Assembling & Collaborating

This section describes the process of finding and collaborating with partners. It reflects one of the core tenets of creative placemaking: that it is collaborative, open, and bottom-up.

## 3. Designing & Executing

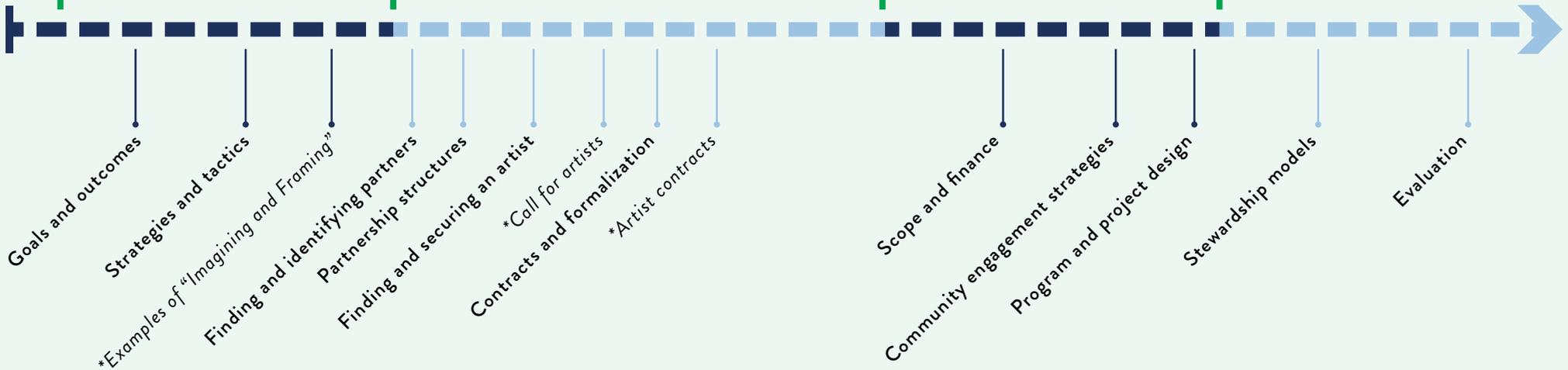
This section describes the process of undertaking the creative placemaking project, as defined by the early planning work, in or around a park or open space.

## 4. Sustaining & Maintaining

This section describes how the efforts to inject arts into parks and open spaces can continue to serve the interests of the park and the community around it. It describes the long-term stewardship of public spaces using culture.

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ARTS-BASED STRATEGY

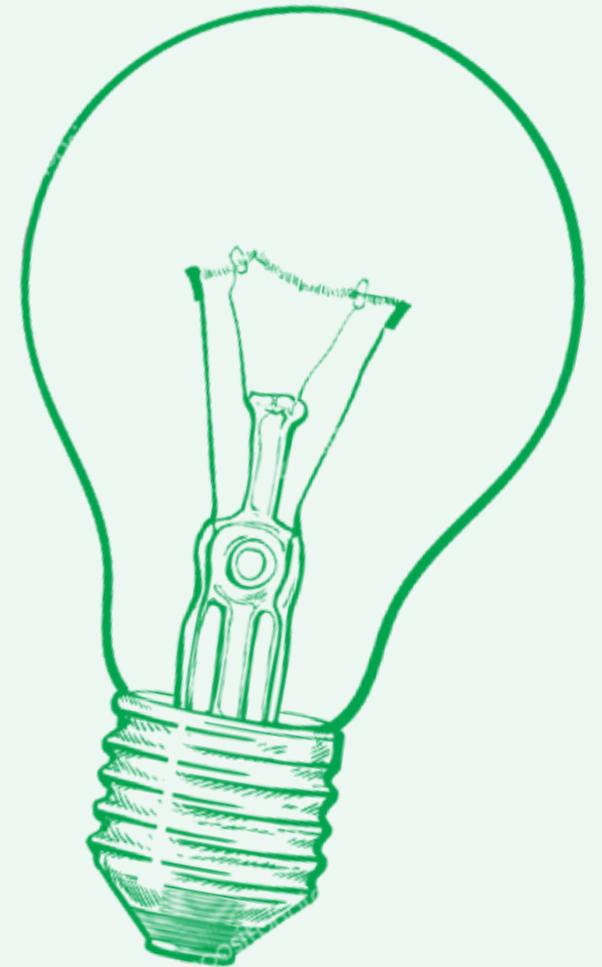


ARTS-BASED STRATEGY

# IMAGINING AND FRAMING

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IMAGINING AND FRAMING



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IMAGINING AND FRAMING

Imagining and framing occurs when project stakeholders decide what goals and outcomes are important to the parks-based arts project and what strategies and tactics should be used to help make sure those outcomes occur. In other words: what do you want to accomplish with creative placemaking and how will you do it? (Hint: the goal should never be, “to create a park.”)

## GOAL & OUTCOMES DEVELOPMENT

One of the main aspects that distinguishes creative placemaking as a process from public art or other kinds of arts-based programming is that it is oriented around clear goals for a place. With harried schedules and tight budgets, organizations and leaders often don’t have the time or means to define goals that can help drive a project forward. At an even finer grain, there is a distinct difference between goals and outcomes.

**Goals** are the general, broad changes that the project intends to achieve.

**Outcomes** are the measurable changes that will happen thanks to the project.

For example, a goal might be to improve public safety in a neighborhood. An outcome might be to achieve a 20 percent reduction in crime in two years. Being as explicit as possible with these, as early as possible, will help to focus the team and the project.

Goals and outcomes exist with a relationship to both the park and the open space, and to the creative placemaking process that is an overlay to it. For the purposes of this *Field Guide*, we will focus on the goals and outcomes that can be specifically attributed to creative placemaking.

### Setting Collective Goals and Outcomes

Projects, parks or otherwise, usually involve a cohort of stakeholders. Many people and organizations will care about a public space, for different reasons. These diverse voices will also bring different skills and tools to the project. Some people have strong technical abilities while others have great communication savvy. If this diversity

#### Example of Goals and Outcomes

This example describes one scenario of a residential neighborhood in a large city. It has historic housing stock and there is a large central park.

#### Goal:

The community wanted to improve public safety in a neighborhood to encourage commercial investments and reduce property crimes.

#### Outcome:

The community decided, after working with the local police officials, to set an outcome of 20 percent reduction in crime over a two year period and that a neighborhood advisory group would exist to work with local police.

#### Next Steps:

On page 34, this example is continued to explain how strategies and tactics can shape effective means to reach these goals.

5. Setting goals is a practice with plentiful resources available. Consider these:

a. Collaboration for Impact’s “[The How to Guide](http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/the-how-to-guide/),” Collaboration for Impact, accessed June 12, 2017, //http://www.collaborationforimpact.com/the-how-to-guide/

b. “[IMPACT: A Practical Guide to Evaluating Community Information Projects](https://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication_pdfs/Impact-a-guide-to-Evaluating-Community-Info-Projects.pdf),” The Knight Foundation, accessed June 12, 2017, //https://www.knightfoundation.org/media/uploads/publication\_pdfs/Impact-a-guide-to-Evaluating-Community-Info-Projects.pdf

c. “[Toolbox for Building Needle-Moving Community Collaborations](https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/resources/White_House_Council_For_Community_Solutions_Tool_Kit.pdf/),” The White House Council for Community Solutions, accessed June 12, 2017, //https://assets.aspeninstitute.org/content/uploads/files/content/docs/resources/White\_House\_Council\_For\_Community\_Solutions\_Tool\_Kit.pdf/.

is not thoughtfully harnessed, competing priorities and approaches can become points of contention rather than strengths.

An effective strategy to avoid this cacophony is to create a collective goal-setting process for creative placemaking projects, perhaps even using culture to help set those goals. This might mean having an artist host a brainstorming meeting to creatively imagine collective goals. Or it might mean launching a community survey to determine the important issues in the area.<sup>5</sup> Either way, it’s important to find shared goals that, once set, will allow everyone to contribute to, and develop commitment to, working toward this change. Once the problem and desired impact have been identified, everyone and every organization can look in their toolbox to find a way to help advance those goals.

### Selecting Specific Outcomes

Once goals have been set, the same group can also identify the outcomes that would make the creative placemaking park project a success. Outcomes should relate to and flow from the goals – they are the changes that result from the activities undertaken, but outcomes differ from the goals in that they can be specifically observed or measured. Undoubtedly, if the project receives any philanthropic or public support, those funders will want to understand the effectiveness of their investment. While this is important, the most important reason to define outcomes is to know whether the arts-based intervention has been successful. Setting these outcomes at the very beginning of the process can help guide decision-making at every step.

For example, a goal might be to activate a public space with citizens from a certain neighborhood. A measurable outcome will be a 50 percent increase in special events over a season and a 25 percent increase in attendance at those events. Another outcome could be that 75 percent of event attendees had a positive experience, as measured by a survey or poll. Parks can have other outcomes that aren’t focused on the park itself. Perhaps the creative placemaking project’s goal involves affordable housing and the specific outcome is a new affordable housing zoning overlay

around a new park development.

These outcomes can be precise, like those above, or they can be more flexible. Data about these outcomes can be either quantitative or qualitative. The former refers to data that is measurable and statistical; the latter refers to data that is measured by subjective opinions, experiences, and values. The strongest evaluations, particularly in creative placemaking project, involve a mixture of data and storytelling; both have drawbacks, but a hybrid approach can help smooth some of these challenges.

As will become clear, most projects will benefit from a mixed-methods approach that includes both quantitative and qualitative data. And, depending on the size and sophistication of the project team, this evaluation can be done on a shoestring, on an ad hoc basis, or as a sophisticated evaluation done in conjunction with professional partners. The key is to design the kind of evaluation that fits the project and that is possible within the capacity of the project team.<sup>6</sup>

### Evaluation Planning

Although evaluation might seem like an activity to undertake after the park has opened or the artistic project is complete, it is actually something that benefits from being completed at the very beginning of any effort. Any project has a range of stakeholders, from funders to public officials to residents. All of these stakeholders most likely need to understand the impact of the project and how their contributions affects that impact. Considering an evaluation plan at the beginning will ensure that these stakeholders receive the information that matters to them and helps them learn about their impact.

Arts programming in the garden of a local health center might best be evaluated by a controlled study that measures the impact on mental health outcomes of participants versus those of nonparticipants. But a music festival in a community park might be best served by hiring local youth to conduct surveys of park-goers' quality of experience. A new playground in a dense community with green

6. A range of helpful resources exist on evaluation best-practices:

- a. "Chapter 38: **Methods for Evaluating Comprehensive Community Initiatives**," Community Toolbox, Kansas University, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://ctb.ku.edu/en/table-of-contents/evaluate/evaluate-community-initiatives>.
- b. "**Survey Methods**," Research Methods Knowledge Base, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.socialresearchmethods.net/kb/survey.php>.
- c. "**Evaluation Methods**," Better Evaluation, accessed June 12, 2017, [http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/start\\_here/decide\\_which\\_method](http://www.betterevaluation.org/en/start_here/decide_which_method).
- d. "**On Target: A Guide for Monitoring and Evaluating Community-Based Projects**," The United Nations, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://unesdoc.unesco.org/images/0018/001862/186231e.pdf>.

infrastructure<sup>7</sup> might benefit from calculating how much water per year will be diverted from stormwater sewers.

Much more detail about evaluation types is covered in the Sustaining and Maintaining section.

## STRATEGIES AND TACTICAL DEVELOPMENT

At this point in the process, the goals and outcomes of the project have been discussed, identified, and confirmed. The stakeholders know the broad intent, as well as what success will look like. They also know how to measure that success.

Creative placemaking happens here.

This is the moment where you must decide what tools will be used to help make that outcome a reality. **In creative placemaking, this is the point it becomes clear that arts-based solutions can help bring about that change.** In other words, doing business as usual—the typical ways of building parks, providing functional transit lines, or providing basic affordable housing—will not address challenges that communities face. **Practices grounded in arts and culture offer more expansive tools to do so; they allow people to feel more connected to place, they create deep engagement opportunities, they bring people together, they allow people to talk about difficult issues, and they animate places over a long period of time.** If these needs feel like strategies that can help advance a project's goals, then creative placemaking can be an effective tool.

Developing strategies and tactics is the next important step in realizing this vision.

**Strategies** are plans of action designed to achieve an overall aim or intention.

**Tactics** are concrete and short-term initiatives that have a defined length and scope.

For people who work in fields that are not artistic, identifying strategies and tactics for a creative placemaking pro-



cess can be intimidating. Artists and cultural professionals spend their careers thinking about inventive ways to creatively express their ideas and talents. A parks professional, landscape architect, or community leader can lean on other voices and expertise to support their work.

Creative placemaking benefits from strong and quality partnerships, perhaps with an artist, a cultural organization, or another creative-minded ally.

What's important is to understand why the arts can help advance a project and how it will do so. In other words, parks-focused people need to develop (1) a broad strategic vision and (2) tactic(s) that can help deliver on that strategy.

### Strategic Vision

As described above, strategies are ways to achieve long-term goals. Creative placemaking is a strategy that can be used to deliver on the outcomes and goals that a group identifies, per the above. After identifying that interest, the team can start to carve a broader strategy that connects that artistic expression with the goals defined above.

An important factor for partners to consider is the relevance and relationship between the artistic practice and intervention to the local community and to the challenge being addressed. These practices, the strategy, must share an affinity for the overarching goal of the project. More importantly, the strategy should emerge from the local knowledge and character of place. The unique cultures and expressions of a community have all the intelligence necessary to build a sophisticated and effective strategy.

For example, a community dance festival in a local arboretum could be a great strategy to encourage civic participation in the surrounding neighborhood and to encourage active recreation in that community. A public art sculpture in that arboretum would be a lovely addition, but it might not address the placemaking goals of the project.

**What's important to understand why the arts can help advance a project and how it will do so.**

#### Example of Strategies and Tactics

This example continues the narrative from page 28, regarding a desire to improve public safety in a neighborhood.

#### Strategy:

To improve public safety in the neighborhood, the project team decides to create arts groups that can support programming in the central community park.

#### Tactics:

Specifically, the team worked with a local performing arts organization that focuses on music and dance, based on traditions from the area.

A new community group was established to have—in the park—regular dance classes, annual music festivals, and a youth photography group.

Secondly, the stakeholder should identify community-based partners to brainstorm and deliver on those possible strategies. To extend the example: an arboretum's managing director will likely not have specific expertise on contemporary dance. However, a dance-oriented nonprofit or even a dancing club could have the interest and expertise to deliver an outdoor dance festival. (Partnerships are discussed in more detail further in this section).

However, what if the stakeholders are at a loss for what kinds of arts-based practices would suit the project? If more general help is needed, seek out community arts organizations, particularly those that have a demonstrated commitment to community development. This might be a local arts council, another arts-based community development corporation (CDC), or an arts institution such as a university museum or a performance center. Even if not formally part of project, these networks can help parks professionals develop a creative placemaking strategy.

### Tactics

Once the arts-based strategy has been identified, the stakeholders can start to brainstorm specific tactics to execute on that strategy. To continue the example above, this would involve listing the dance-based activities that could occur at the arboretum. Perhaps the stakeholders will organize five dance recitals in a scenic location at the venue, host weekly dance classes for local elementary school students, or host a Friday night party with contemporary pop music and bring in a well-known guest artist to give a master class.

Other strategies will have widely different tactics: participatory design exercises with local sculptors, a "Photovoice" project that allows kids to capture inspirational images, or cooking classes with chefs from around the world. The range of tactics varies as widely as does human imagination. Having the right stakeholders in place will ensure that these tactics fit in the overall strategy and that the overall strategy will help achieve the outcomes and goals of the project.

## Examples

While the *Field Guide* has collected 11 world-class examples of creative placemaking in parks from around the country, the following microexamples will help to sketch out how an “imagining and framing process might look.

### KIWANIS-METHOW PARK (WENATCHEE, WASHINGTON)

#### Geographic Context

The South Wenatchee, Washington community is diverse (with a high percentage of Latino residents), proud of its agricultural significance as an apple producer, and culturally-rich. At the same time, the community is also significantly under-served and under-resourced, which is particularly true with regard to access to health-related services.

#### What were the goals?

The goals of this project was to increase the visibility of public health resources to the South Wenatchee community, particularly those focused on mental health. These mental issues ranged from clinical conditions of depression and anxiety, to those that involved social participation and inclusiveness. While the area has social service providers, many migrant families felt a lack of comfort in accessing them.

#### Art-based Strategy

This goal emerged during the participatory design process for the renovation of an important park in South Wenatchee. To fully explore those goals, interactive design outreach was conducted, in English and Spanish, at local community and cultural events, such as the Northwest Mariachi Festival. Wenatchee happens to be an international hub for mariachi music. Partner organizations – such as the Wenatchee Museum and Cultural Center and The Numerica Performing Arts Center, leveraged their own deep connections to the community. Because this arts-based engagement was so successful, a range of medical and social-service providers joined the park-based engagement. They were able to connect with residents about issues of mental health, dental care, and other important issues. This collaborative approach, while first created to support the park, is continuing as a broad way to celebrate this community.

#### What Happened?

A “Health Wenatchee” festival, in combination with culturally-based communication materials, has helped to break down the barriers that have isolated this community from much needed resources. Culture is integrated into each step as a meaningful way to communicate important health concepts and create connections between community members and resource providers. Overall, the arts and cultural activities make this park a place to come together to improve all forms of health outcomes.



Kiwanis-Methow Park. 2016. Source: The Trust for Public Land.



Equipo Verde. 2016. Source: The Trust for Public Land.

### AVALON GREEN ALLEYS (LOS ANGELES)

#### Geographic Context

There are 900 linear miles of alleys in Los Angeles, which combined would make up about 3 square miles—about twice the size of New York’s Central Park. Partnering with the City of Los Angeles’ Community Redevelopment Agency, Bureau of Sanitation, the University of Southern California’s Center for Sustainable Cities, Jefferson High School and others, The Trust for Public Land is working to re-purpose several neighborhood alleys and transform them into community park spaces.

#### What were the goals?

There are two important goals for this project. The first is use these alleys to capture and infiltrate storm water from nearby alleys and streets to manage runoff. The second goal has been to create community organizing groups in these areas, to support political and social activism for issues that go beyond storm water and public spaces.

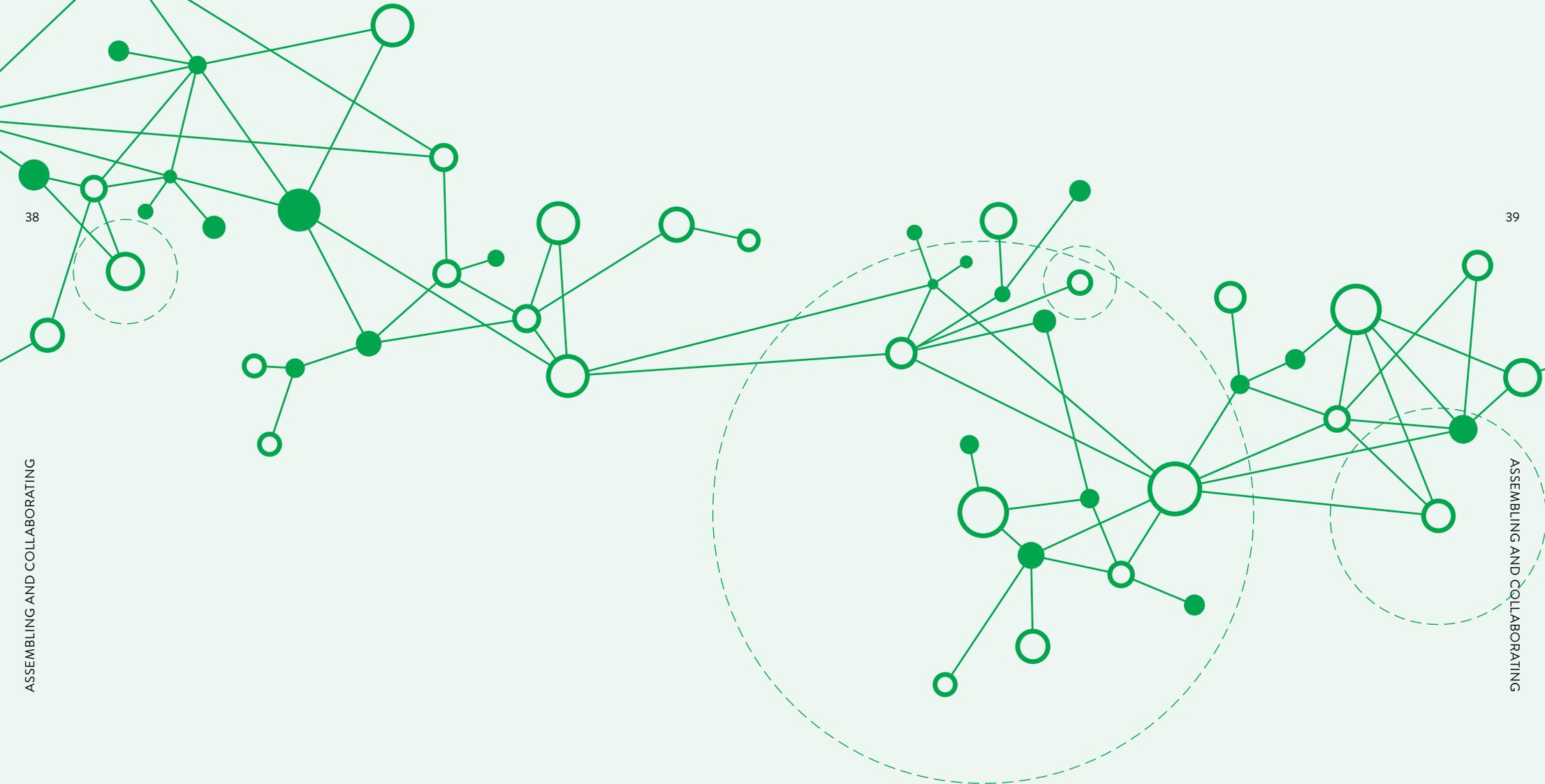
#### Art-based Strategy

To help achieve these goals, the project team conceived of the alleyways as cultural spaces by including community-created murals and pavement art. The inclusion of these elements intends to combine resilience and environmental considerations with community engagement, educational opportunities, and beautiful spaces that communities use, take ownership of, and are proud of. The engagement used to create these cultural elements was then transferred into a long-term community organization to steward these spaces and to organize the neighborhood.

#### What Happened?

Community members continue to use and care for these spaces, hosting festivals, recreational and educational opportunities, and clean-up days in the alleys. The organization created, Equipo Verde, has helped to build community resiliency and trust around a host of issues. The success of this project has helped to build momentum around future green alleyways around the City of Los Angeles.

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Jolino Bessera. 2014. Source: Julia Stolz, courtesy of The Trust for Public Land.

## FINDING AND IDENTIFYING PARTNERS

The previous section, *Imagining and Framing*, was grounded in a framework that construed community development as problem solving, a model that can be applied to any creative placemaking project, irrespective of its focus. This and the following two sections provide knowledge specific to the practice of creative placemaking in parks and open spaces.

The rationale behind *Assembling and Collaborating*—the process of finding and collaborating with partners—reflects to one of the core tenets of creative placemaking: that it is collaborative, open, and bottom-up. Since the process is just as, if not more, important that the product, those individuals and groups going along need to be the right partners and deriving the right kind of benefit.

### Two Principles of Partnerships

#### 1. Radical Inclusion

Projects should be as inclusive as possible and involve a wide variety of collaborators.

#### 2. Resident Input

Residents and locals have an intuitive sense of their community in terms of what matters and what's possible. This input should be a critical part of any project team.

Two overarching principles are worth stating up front. First, these partnerships often do and should include a broad range of actors. A healthy creative placemaking initiative typically involves all types of people with all types of perspectives: city officials, designers, nonprofits, neighborhood groups, schools, etc. This heterogeneity can be dizzying and complex to manage, but every effort should be made to encourage inclusiveness when curating a partnership.

The second principle of this section states that creative placemaking in parks should lead with the opinions and values of the residents who will eventually use and care for that park. This grassroots, bottom-up perspective speaks to the important connection between placemaking and equity. Equity is deeply tied to the value of parks. The stakeholders in any project should not shy away from this concept, on the contrary, they should collaboratively define what equity means for their particular community.<sup>8</sup>



8. Policylink's **Equity Toolkit** is a valuable resource to understand equitable development and gather resources to make your community more equitable. See more at: // <http://www.policylink.org/equity-tools/>.

Finding and identifying partners can be both deliberate and organic – that is, proactively seeking new relationships and using natural networks of community partners. The right approach to building partnerships knows what relationships – organizational and individual – exist, and strengthens those; it also knows what connections do not exist, and finds ways to secure those.

### What kind of partners are necessary

Many assume that parks are created, all over the country, by very typical means: a public park agency engages with a community, identifies priority areas for investment, and then expends capital to develop that park. Although many park projects do follow this pathway, the nature of open space development is subject to the vagaries and nuances of community development and city life.

Our parks, open spaces, civic spaces, and outdoor areas have generative stories that start from mayoral priorities or emerge from grassroots activism; they begin with a parks department's spending plan or they are created by a private conservancy's largesse. They might pop up on va-

cant lots or they add recreation along the sinews of a waterway. And many “park” projects don’t involve the creation of a new park; instead, they involve the renovation or programming of existing spaces. Creative placemaking relishes this imprecision and can enhance any effort to create parks or open spaces. Similarly, creative placemaking can naturally enhance any type of partnership, helping to elevate the human qualities of organizations and individuals.

**Many “park” projects don’t involve the creation of a new park; instead, they involve the renovation or programming of existing spaces. Creative placemaking relishes this imprecision and can enhance any effort to create parks or open spaces.**

So, how can certain partners leverage creative placemaking in the creation of parks?

**City and public authorities:** Public officials can be drivers of creative placemaking in a park project. Every municipality is organized by different types of government and management. Depending on the scale of the project and the size of the city, securing mayoral or executive-level support can provide critical backing and potential pathways to funding. Even if not a full-time partnership, a relationship with this leadership level can help eliminate barriers to success.

City agencies, such as parks or cultural affairs departments, have focused, mission driven goals, often organized around a set of services and spending mandates. Agencies can provide project support and regulatory assistance. Agency staff people often have strong connections to other partners and to members of the community. Parks agencies, often involved in the creation of community parks, are natural and frequent partners for creative placemaking.

Non-parks agencies can be very helpful to a creative placemaking project in a park. School departments care deeply about the inclusive nature of their schoolyards. Water quality agencies have interest in educating the community about environmental risks. However, don’t assume that one city represen-

tative can speak to city mandates that guide a different department.

Public authorities, such as metropolitan planning organizations (MPO) or neighborhood development authorities are not city agencies, even if their work might be entirely within a certain city. These agencies are often authorized by states and have a unique governance structure. Take care in understanding the details of their governance and abilities so as to recognize their potential contribution to a creative placemaking project. Many of these authorities have developed a growing interest in how the arts can better their work.

**Neighborhood groups and local actors:** The groups and individuals who live in and represent the neighborhoods around the park or open space are key stakeholders. These groups, too, can vary widely by type and intent. Many cities have formal neighborhood organizations; these groups are foundations for engagement and support. Many other informal groups might exist—around activities, ethnicity, religion or interests—that have a place-based focus. These organizations are often nimbler and, if active, undertake frequent programming.

A CDC is a registered nonprofit with the intent of bettering a certain neighborhood, possibly through affordable housing or workforce training. These organizations can make great partners for creative placemaking efforts in parks because they share an interest in place-based development activities.<sup>9</sup>

At the same time, creative placemaking should be a practice that engages the broadest possible audience, and many residents don’t have the time or means to participate in formal organizations, don’t have experience with these processes, or feel unwelcome. A strong partnership, even if it poses challenges and hurdles, involves members of the community who feel displaced or unwelcome, even if that poses challenges and hurdles. Culture is a great way to en-

9. **Community Wealth** has a great resource on understanding Community Development Corporations (CDCs) and their impact on places. [//http://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/cdcs/index.html/](http://community-wealth.org/strategies/panel/cdcs/index.html/).

courage this inclusive attitude toward participation; shared food experiences, music events, or sports activities, can bring people together in profound ways. **Reaching out to people, and not waiting for them to reach out first, is a principle that can't be stated strongly enough.** Doing so requires creativity, patience, and generosity.

**Artists and artistic organizations:** Artistic partners are key stakeholders in a creative placemaking project. However, many of us don't have a ready list of artists and creative people to call in service of this effort, and even if we did, those connections might not have a community development focus or might not understand how to work in parks. The following arts-based organizations, derived from the Americans for the Arts resources, can contribute in specific ways to a creative placemaking project.



#### Local arts agencies and councils

These governmental or quasi-governmental organizations support artists and arts organizations in a certain local geography. They often serve as “pass through” organizations, directing funding from the federal or state level to local groups and individuals. If their funding mandates align, they could be a good source of funding, and if their mission is aligned with community development goals, they might be useful as strategic thinking and policy partners.

*Example: LexArts, Lexington, Kentucky's local arts council, provides funding to local arts organizations and other programming to support the arts in the area. It is funded through a mixture of public and private sources.*

#### Arts service organizations

A nonprofit organization that furthers the interests of artists, creators, arts organizations, and elements of the arts community. The arts service organization's activities can include policy development, advocacy, marketing, provision of professional services, and production of collective projects. These organizations are great partners to help identify artists and

cultural producers in the area, particularly because they are targeting people who are from that region.

*Example: Alliance of Resident Theatres (A.R.T.)—New York assists over 360 member theatres in managing their theatre companies effectively so they may realize their rich artistic visions and serve their diverse audiences well.*

#### Civic engagement arts organizations

An arts organization that bring artists, community leaders, and residents together to address issues of community engagement and democracy. These organizations, should your region be so lucky to have one, can be your closest ally in a creative placemaking project. They would have many resources to brainstorm potential creative projects and artists to deliver on those projects.

*Example: Springboard for the Arts cultivates vibrant communities by connecting artists with the skills, information, and services they need to make a living and a life.*

#### Cultural and arts centers

Organizations that promote, produce, or provide access to a variety of arts experiences encompassing the visual, media, or performing arts. These organizations range from museums and galleries to theaters and concert halls. Depending on their mission and capacity, many of these organizations have community engagement or public-facing interests. Performances or events in parks and open spaces might be something attractive to these institutions, many of whom are looking to bring artistic work closer to the public.

*Example: The New World Symphony recently constructed a park where performances are live-streamed via video and are accessible to the general public.*

#### Folk and traditional arts organizations

Organizations that are engaged in the promotion, production, or performance of art forms that were developed as a part of the history, culture, religion,

language, or work of a region or people, and passed from generation to generation as a part of their traditions. In many rural communities, the folk arts connect people to a common sense of heritage and place. If willing, many of these organizations would be able to contribute a great deal to a creative placemaking project.

*Example: Appalshop, in Whitesburg, Kentucky, promotes rural development in Appalachia through a diverse array of arts-based programming and events.*

#### Culturally specific arts organizations

Organizations that further the artistic and cultural offerings of the community with a mission that clearly represents a specific culture. Many of these organizations have a specific geography that they represent; in this way, they could be a great partner in a creative placemaking project. For example, if a neighborhood has an ethnic identity, a park might be an opportunity to celebrate that culture.

*Example: Longhouse Media is a Washington State organization dedicated to indigenous people to use media as a tool for self-expression, cultural preservation, and social change.*

Many projects may not need an organizational partner and can rely on an individual to provide the artistic contribution. If that is a desired path, any of the arts organizations above can help to identify individual artists or partners.

Additionally, even though many of these organizations have a community-based mission and are nonprofits, their time is still valuable. All partners should have a realistic sense of their commitments and what that commitment will cost. Just because the arts can be exuberant and fun doesn't mean it is not without costs. Artists, like any professionals, need to be fairly compensated for their time and expertise.

**Parks and other nonprofits:** A range of other community development organizations and nonprofits could provide value to a project partnership. Parks nonprofits—in-

cluding friends groups, advocacy groups, and land trusts can provide important resources about creative activities in parks and open spaces.

Other interest-based nonprofits, can be aligned to serve a park-based creative placemaking project. For example, public health organizations make for natural partners, particularly where increased physical activity is a key goal. Or, affordable housing developers have a vested stake in contiguous public space and might want to ensure the community and the open space are well connected.

Partnerships thrive in the same way gardens do, with ample planning and care. Identifying and even securing partnerships doesn't guarantee that those groups will work together smoothly and efficiently.

## PARTNERSHIP STRUCTURES

### **Project roles and organization**

Projects, be they parks or large buildings, have a range of team types. Large planning or development projects have an inherently large and complex group of stakeholders; they are typically bound together by legal documents that describe the precise nature of those relationships. Community development projects can often have loosely organized and informal partnerships. Creative placemaking in parks can benefit from a hybrid approach, creating structure where necessary but also allowing for flexibility and change. The following principles are key:

- 1.** Define a project leader or project leadership team. Creative placemaking projects usually involve a wide range of stakeholders, some of whom work in rigid environments, like cities, and some of whom work with much less structure, like an independent artist. Identifying an effective project leader can help give all stakeholders an understanding of their role, drive the project forward on a schedule, and give the team the chance to think strategically.
- 2.** Ensure that the team has ways to hear, elevate and value every voice, even those that don't have a regular



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William Dick School. 2014. Source: Jenna Stamm, courtesy of The Trust for Public Land.

presence. Regularly scheduled project meetings are key, but so are more informal ways to reach people, such as community meetings and celebratory events.

**3.** Artists and cultural entities shouldn't be relegated to a topic on an agenda; they should be integrated members of any team and they should be a part of that team, when possible, from the beginning of any project. Don't wait until a "public art" component for a park needs to be designed; include those creative voices from the outset as part of the community engagement and design process. This might require a leap of faith and a bit of uncertainty, but examples abound for how artists have spearheaded projects in ways that make the projects more meaningful to people and therefore more effective.

#### **MOUs and formal relationships**

The partnerships that allow for creative placemaking in parks range from free form and unstructured to formal and highly structured. Finding the right partnership is an important step, both to protect all the participants and to ensure that ideas and conversation can remain flexible.

There are several key indicators that can help determine whether more formal partnerships are necessary: when financial management falls on more than one organization, when risk management falls on more than one organization, and when the project is of such complexity as to require detailed implementation plans. If the art or park project checks any of these boxes, then leaning toward a more formal partnership might be advisable.

A memorandum of understanding (MOU) is a flexible tool for creative placemaking practices. It describes a "convergence of will" between two parties that is formal but not legally binding. Depending on its construction, an MOU can be interpreted as a binding contract. This document can help define the roles of parties, identify risk management responsibilities, assign financial terms, and set forth important dates and goals.

A range of other tools can establish formal relationships.

Cities and local authorities have formal *contracts, covenants and agreements* that might be required and/or useful. Similarly, *contracts for hire* can establish requirements for work products between parties. *Nonprofit by-laws* can help bring clarity to organizational roles and requirements.



#### **Communications and informal relationships**

In a much more informal way, meeting minutes, email summaries, and written work plans can offer mutual understanding and expectations. Creative processes can feel like they should be open ended and free-wheeling. However, a gentle and thoughtful level of project management can bring consistency to the process. Creative placemaking projects in parks and open spaces can often involve widely different discipline types – water engineers and water sculptors, traffic planners and movement artists. Taking the time to underpin the process with structure and constraint will allow all involved to do their job better.

**Creative placemaking projects in parks and open spaces can often involve widely different discipline types – water engineers and water sculptors, traffic planners and movement artists.**

And because of that diversity, open and frequent communication is critical to any project's success. Communication should be empathetic, always seeking to understand the opinions of residents, city officials, and artists; frequent, not letting gaps of time derail momentum; and clear, using jargon-free and simple language to communicate intent and needs.

While the range of partnership types in community development projects vary widely, in creative placemaking projects, the partnership with an artist or cultural producer deserves special attention. Parks professionals and artists, while they may have similar motivations, can have different expectations and ways of workings. Thankfully, there are tried and true methods to find and secure the services of artist and creatives.

## FINDING AND SECURING AN ARTIST

This section describes how to select an artist. However, in many instances, this process will not be necessary, because the artist is already part of the team or there is a clear relationship in place. Quality partnerships will ensure the right pathway forward is used.

### Artistic advisory board

A great strategy to answer these questions, and to manage the steps described below, is to create an *artistic advisory board or committee*. This group can be distinct from the project team and have representation from all the key stakeholders, including community residents, designers, local officials, and other artists. This group will ensure that the selection process is accountable both to the project and to the community.

### Finding an artist

For park projects, most calls for artists will be for new artworks or art experiences, not previously created pieces (although in some exceptional cases, such as a well-known outdoor sculptor, this may not be the case). Three methods to call for artists will work in most park and open space scenarios: the contest, which can be used for smaller elements such as wayfinding or signage; a *request for proposals* (RFPs), where artists submit fully realized proposals for the artwork; or a *request for qualifications* (RFQ), where artists submit qualifications about their experience and abilities. (Often, RFQs are used as a screening process for RFPs – the two can operate as parts of the same selection process.)

While RFPs and RFQs can vary in their scope and detail, certain components—these, derived from Springboard for the Arts’ resource,<sup>10</sup>—often form the core of a good call for artist (see the opposite page).

Creative placemaking is not synonymous with public art. It is important to clearly describe the community development outcomes and strategies in the summary, background, and project description sections of the RFP/Q.

10. “Find an Artist Toolkit,” *Springboard for the Arts*, accessed June 12, 2017, //<http://springboardexchange.org/find-an-artist-toolkit/>.

## CALL FOR ARTISTS

### Summary

Briefly say what you are looking for, what type of call this is, the deadline, and artist compensation.

### Background/Context

Relevant info about who is commissioning the work and the site where the final artwork will be located.

### Project description

What kind of art are you seeking? What are big-picture reasons for working with an artist?

### Details

Specific parameters of the site, budget, and type of artwork you are seeking.

### Compensation

What will you be paying for this work and what it should cover?

### Eligibility

Who can apply to this call?

### Selection criteria

Criteria by which proposals will be judged/selected.

### Selection process

Who will jury proposals, and what will that process look like?

### Application Process

Materials that need to be submitted to fulfill the call and where to send them.

### Timeline

List of relevant dates—from submission deadline to artist notification and project completion.

For example, instead of describing just the site of a potential public sculpture, talk in detail about issues surrounding the creation of the park—water management, social cohesion, etc—and foreground those goals in the brief. This focus will help the artists create better and more engaging artistic expressions.

The RFP/Q needs to balance the need for sensible constraints with an openness to creativity and exploration. Park projects have complicated environmental factors (soil types, water, climactic exposure); these constraints should be clearly stated and defined. Project schedules and budgets put additional constraints onto any potential intervention by an artist. Liability and maintenance planning, while cumbersome, should not be ignored: what happens if someone gets hurt, and who maintains the work? Many cities have established criteria for dealing with art in the public realm, such as Chattanooga’s “Policies and Procedures for Artwork Donations, Loans and Exhibitions.”<sup>11</sup>

At the same time, RFPs should offer language that inspires wonder and passion. Lead with the challenges and the potential of this creative expression to engage those challenges. Imbue the city or neighborhood with poetry and imagination; be descriptive about the wonderful assets of the place. Explain the need for the park, if it’s a new project, or its history, if its existing, to situate the open space in relationship to the community.

Artists and creatives will enjoy this tension between the pragmatic and the poetic.

### Where to look for artists

Releasing this call for artists requires an equal amount of thought.

One of the early decisions involves the geography of that search. Most creative placemaking projects tend to use

**RFPs should offer language that inspires wonder and passion. Lead with the challenges and the potential of this creative expression to engage those challenges.**

11. “Policies and Procedures for Artwork Donations, Loans and Exhibitions,” *Public Art Chattanooga*, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.chattanooga.gov/public-art/about/guidelines>.

local artists to emphasize the community-focused aspect of the work. “Local” itself has a range of definitions: is local within the metropolitan region, say, the San Francisco Bay Area; or is local the specific neighborhood, say, the Tenderloin in San Francisco? Working in parks and open spaces has its own challenges, so a project team might want an outdoor-based environmental artist, which means that the search would broaden to include state or regional artists. For a signature arts installation in a major city, that artists search might even have to be national.

There is no right or wrong choice. The varying ranges of a search have equal parts value and challenge; the prudent team will discuss these tradeoffs and have a clear position from the outset.

With the scope defined, a plethora of resources exists to facilitate the search. Local arts councils and arts nonprofits frequently have spaces to post these opportunities; and if not, they can help to identify local artists and creative individuals. Small and community foundations often have lists of artists and cultural networks. At larger scales, many states have arts councils, foundations or centers that actively post and distribute opportunities for artists.

### Local media platforms can be helpful, such as:

1. Ask artists where they find calls
2. Social media (Facebook, Twitter, etc.)
3. Email newsletters
4. Press release
5. Print media
6. Info meetings—you can hold several info meetings to go over requirements/process and answer questions
7. Post flyer at places in the neighborhood where artists hang out—art supply stores, art departments, coffee shops, etc.

### Nationally, there are well-established public art databases that have been set up just for these purposes.

1. Americans for the Arts Public Art Network
2. Springboard for the Arts
3. ArtDeadline.com

Depending on the level of experience in the arts, the project team can also be proactive in its search. Researching artists with qualifications and work that matches the intent of the project can help with selection criteria and can possibly even identify candidates. Use local networks to investigate the artistic community.

Searches for public artists can be hampered because the “usual suspects” apply (which is not in itself a bad thing). This limited response can run counter to creative placemaking’s implicit goal of elevating every voice in a community with unique methods of creative expression. Taking risks in the search and looking deeply at nontraditional voices can be transformative and yield important conversations about inclusive processes.

### How to evaluate and select artists and partners

A clear, consistent, and agreed-upon framework to evaluate the artists’ responses will make the selection process relatively painless and without controversy. The selection process itself can be designed to accommodate many desires. On the one hand, creative placemaking wants to engage the community in every aspect of the process. This could mean using a community vote to help evaluate respondents (or just finalists). It could mean that community members have a substantial presence in a selection committee.

This needs to be balanced with the pragmatics mentioned above: does the artists have the right level of experience to accomplish the proposed project? Are there issues of liability or risk to consider? Does the proposal meet the budgetary requirements of the project? A good selection process will likely involve a mixture of expert advice plus strong community engagement. Irrespective, the entire process should be transparent and open. The community should be aware of the criteria and how the selection will happen. There should be ample opportunity for participation and comment.

The criteria for selection depend on the type of search and the needs of the project. However, a sampling of criteria could include any of the following:

1. Experience and abilities of the artist
2. Artistic merit of the proposed work or of the artist’s previous work
3. Relevance to the community development goals of the project
4. Understanding of the place and context (or experience in similar kinds of places)
5. Ability to work well with diverse groups of people
6. Ability to meet a defined budget and schedule
7. Diversity and representations of artistic team

These criteria are merely examples. Project organizers can mix and weight criteria in any way they see fit. Depending on the selection type, an artist might be chosen from an initial round of review or after subsequent rounds. For example, an RFQ process might receive 13 applications of which the committee selects three to continue to a more in-depth RFP process. Or, a contest might have the community vote for the top three to continue to a selection panel.

After selection of a winner, a few important steps should be undertaken. Due diligence of that individual might be a prudent next step: check references and evaluate the proposed budget. Make sure that all respondents are notified of the committee’s decision in a timely manner. Consider a press release to announce the winner and to celebrate the milestone.

## CONTRACTS AND FORMALIZATION

In an ideal world, the selection of an artist would presage the beginning of a period of creativity and engagement, unencumbered by formality and legality. In many cases of creative placemaking, this flexibility is not only possible but also recommended.<sup>12</sup> Limiting the noise in a public project allows everyone to relate to the park and to the art in more meaningful ways. However, human relationships are messy, and in more complex and expensive commissions, creating a contract or legal framework is advisable. Negotiating and agreeing to the project’s constraints early will allow the artist to maximize her or his creative vision during the process and will limit any setbacks created by crossed signals.

12. The Trust for Public Land and the City Parks Alliance advocate for encumbering projects with the right amount of legal and financial protection. Every project should welcome the appropriate amount of accountability and oversight.

### Partnerships and legality

Unlike simple artist contracts with two clearly defined parties, creative placemaking projects can include many more variables and complexities. These projects are often bootstrapped and ad hoc, or they involve a dizzying array of partners. Given these conditions, the contractual and legal relationships should be flexible and thoughtful, appreciative of the various constraints at play.

If any public entity is included on the project team, there will be a host of legal hurdles. Contracting with a city or county government requires special review and due diligence that include a conflict of interest, minority/women hiring, financial performance, etc. Any capital money that flows to or from a public entity will also have a legal framework, including covenants about public ownership and restrictions on eligibility based on the budgeting process. 

The possible complexities and variability of working with public entities are too complex to enumerate, but any project should have a realistic and opportunistic understanding of what public partners can accomplish.

### Contract structure

Artist contracts can vary, dependent upon the contracting organization, project requirements, and often, the funding sources. The outline on the opposite page, based on a great resource by the Artists Network, outlines important sections and content to possibly include in an artist contract, with notes about specific challenges for working in open spaces.

Any development and review of contracts should, when possible, be accompanied by review from legal experts inside the project team. If this isn't feasible or the project is less formal, many community and arts-based nonprofits offer reduced-cost or free legal services.

## ARTIST CONTRACTS

**Client Information:** Names, organization, address, etc.

**Project Information:** In this section, the community development outcomes should be clearly stated. This is an important distinction for creative placemaking projects: the artist should understand that the goals often transcend the work itself. Depending on how detailed the artist's proposal was, this section should also describe the expectations of the artistic work, whether it is a sculpture or public performance for example. In short, it answers the what, where, why, how, who, and when.

**Project Price and Payment Terms:** Every detail about money should be described here. How much will the artist be paid? In one lump sum or over multiple check-ins and deliverables? Many contracts give the artist 50 percent of the fee at the beginning and 50 percent upon successful completion. Others include a payment at the midpoint after the proposed artwork has been approved. What are the capital costs of the artwork or activity – are they lumped together with the artist fee? Are there local or state taxes to note?

**Revisions and Review:** During the design and execution of the artwork, how many times does the client get to revise the direction and the final product? Clearly defining these back-and-forth reviews protects the artist by limiting endless reviews and it protects the client by providing dedicated review points.

**Ownership of Artwork/Files/Intellectual Property:** In this section, the parties agree on the ownership of the artwork and the intellectual property, and when that ownership changes, if at all. This section should clarify whether the client – or some other party – owns the artwork and the rights to distribute its images. It should describe what rights the artist has in using images of the work in her or his own professional development. If the artistic contribution was a festival, who owns the rights for any branding or naming? Who owns the collateral, such as a study model or material sample?

**Production Schedule and Delivery of a Project:** This section should clearly describe when the artwork or event should be delivered and any interim steps prior. If this is a creative placemaking project in a new park, it would be important to coordinate the delivery of any artwork with the master construction schedule.

**Claims Period:** This section describes the extent to which the client can make claims for defects, damages and/or shortages to a final product. Failure to make claims within a designated period would constitute an irrevocable acceptance of the project.

**Proofing of the Final Project:** This section is where the artist states the final product will be free of defects, damages and/or shortages. It is related to the revision and claims sections above.

**Cancellation or Delay:** This section would describe what happens if a project is cancelled; it defines who owns the work products to date and what financial terms are available to the artist for work completed to date.

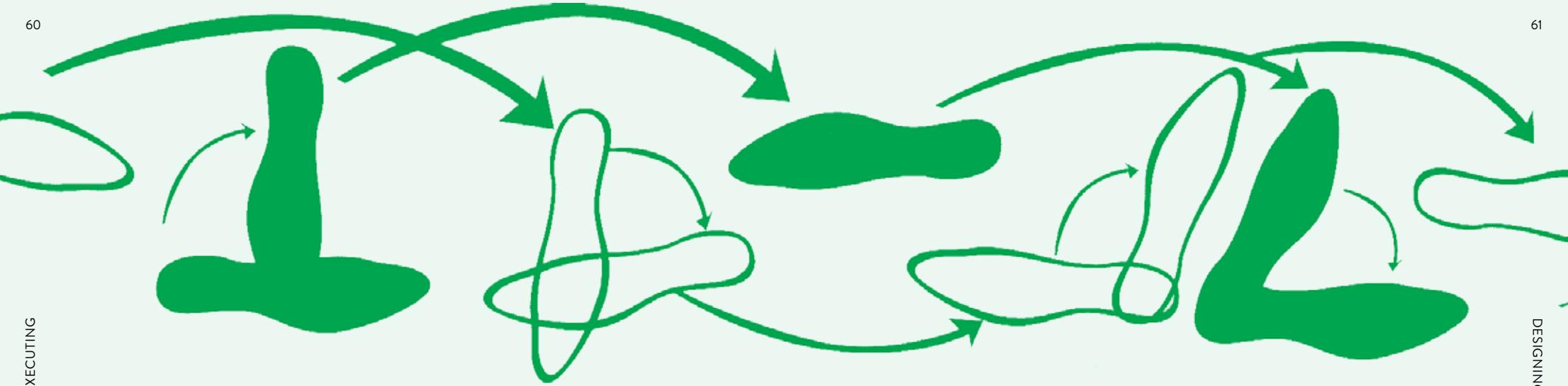
**Confidentiality:** Some projects need confidentiality agreements. This confidentiality could be scaled back to include just correspondence and other project-related materials, or it could fully limit any dissemination of the project collateral and its existence.

**Acceptance of the Agreement:** This section formalizes, by both parties, acceptance of the terms described in the document. It should include a signature, printed name, and date for each party.

# DESIGNING AND EXECUTING

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DESIGNING AND EXECUTING

DESIGNING AND EXECUTING

In many ways, the largest conceptual challenges should have already been addressed by the first two steps; if so, the project team should have a clear roadmap to execute. At this point, the team should know why creative placemaking is important to the park or open space, and who will execute that vision. If a good project schedule has been established, then the team will know when certain milestones should be achieved. This is not to say that the process will run smoothly—but when bumps in the road do occur, everyone involved will have a common understanding of the what, why, who, and when.

## SCOPE AND FINANCE

### Creative placemaking budget tips

In any “how-to” for creative placemaking, advice about fundraising and money often becomes the most frequently requested information. Although raising the money to make anything happen is essential, it shouldn’t dominate the planning of a project. Taking the time to strategize and to plan will result in a thoughtful project or idea; and good ideas get funded more often than not.

A number of useful sources exist to find resources for creative placemaking projects. There are a few foundations and entities that support creative placemaking specifically. The NEA is a national leader in creative placemaking funding. The agency’s Our Town grants program, in addition to its Art Works funding, should be great first places to explore. ArtPlace America has a national fund for creative placemaking in addition to leadership in building the field writ large.

Creative placemaking can often feel like the cherry on top of a delicious cake, instead of the cherry flavoring that’s integral to the entire project, batter, icing, and all. This makes it susceptible to being cut during a scope reduction. During budgeting for a new park project, the creative placemaking elements can be folded into the capital budget as a key part of the project. Instead of thinking that the artistic element is an add-on to projects, it should be embedded in the project itself. Similarly, for artistic events and programming, these costs can be embedded into an

outreach or design budget, baking them into the process itself. Working to ensure artistic elements are routinely and habitually embedded into project budgets will help reduce these vital components’ vulnerability.

For many activities, such as a performance series or a pop-up activity, the project team could elect to charge fees for those activities, such as an entrance ticket. The same decisions that parks professionals make about where to charge fees for revenue are also at play in creative placemaking. Ideally, cultural experiences used for community development should be as open and accessible as possible. In some instances, part of an experience might help generate revenue. For example, inviting a local craft brewer to an outdoor concert and splitting the profit helps generate revenue without limiting the opportunity for anyone to enjoy the experience.

During the search for funding, aligning the funder’s mission to a product or scope that reflects that mission will result in more successful requests. Often, locally based funders will be the drivers for a certain creative placemaking activity. By having a conversation about their interests and a project’s interests, a mutually agreed-to scope can be defined and a new project partner can emerge.<sup>13</sup>

Funders, whether foundations, corporations, or individuals, can serve as important partners in these project, providing not only resources, but resources and intelligence.

### Scope development

As with any complex undertaking, the creative placemaking elements of a project should have a well-thought-out budgetary scope. This scope will include any hard costs – materials and fabrication of any artistic elements – and soft costs – artist fees, programming, and staff time.

Artists require fees just as any professional does; those fees often depend on the experience, expertise, and project type.<sup>14</sup> This should be negotiated as part of a contract

**Ideally, cultural experiences used for community development should be as open and accessible as possible.**

13. The **Foundation Center** has ample resources to guide you to funding opportunities and to improve your grant-writing abilities, [www.foundationcenter.org](http://www.foundationcenter.org).

14. The **WAGE Artist Fee Calculator** is a great tool to estimate the costs associated with working with an artist. <https://www.wageforwork.com/certification/2/fee-calculator>

or scoping phase.

Other costs might be less apparent. Moving or transport costs can quickly escalate. Permits and fees will be a reality in many public spaces. Insurance and occupancy taxes are often required for any kind of event or gathering. Taxes for commercial activity can be significant.

When developing a scope, consider the range of activities the project team might want to undertake. While a public sculpture or mural has known costs, other activities could include an opening night party, regular programming, or educational activities that might occur around this artwork. If programming is to be ongoing, what regular income will offset those costs? Maintenance costs for permanent installations require early planning.

Many organizations forget about documentation and marketing. Project teams would benefit from having the resources to document the process and end products. This could involve professional photography, journalism, or even a documentary. Marketing the park, artwork, and activities will incur expenses just as any other marketing campaign would. Consider allocating 15 percent of the creative placemaking budget to documentation and marketing.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Community engagement encompasses a range of activities where the eventual audience and user-group for the park or open space is included in the process of imagining, designing, and building that space. One of the core tenets of creative placemaking is its ability and interest in engaging people with creative means and engaging more diverse audiences.

Culture binds us to place. Using culture in community engagement helps bind people to the vision of place to which the project aspires.

### Types of engagement

Creative placemaking and community engagement are

often synonymous and can have blurred boundaries. Roughly speaking, the following example demonstrates the range of the arts role in engaging with communities in a thoughtful way:

#### Priority Identification

Before even designing a park, artists can help devise creative ways to determine the priorities or needs of a certain community. They can use storytelling or visual maps to zero in on issues that might not be visible otherwise or ask creative questions about how to transform underused spaces.

#### Design Engagement

Engagement practices can sometimes feel rote and impersonal, a formal meeting in a community center with an audience and a panel. Artists can devise clever ways to gauge the needs and dreams of people. This could involve interactive fabrication, Photovoice projects, curriculum development in schools, or artist-led walking tours. These experiences move people away from what they are expected to say about a project and opens the imagination. The following are general categories of types of community engagement.

#### *Participatory Design*

Participatory design is a great tool that allows residents and end-users to codesign alongside professionals. Artists and other creatives can be a great addition to participatory design teams, inventing novel ways to gather feedback and ensure the community has a voice in the process. They might develop games to gather more engaged feedback or they might lead a mural project to understand what values are important to communities.

#### *Site Activation*

The time between the genesis of an idea to build or renovate a park and substantial completion can span many years, leaving residents feeling like they were promised something that wasn't delivered. Hosting events and programming on a site before construction starts allows people to acclimate to the site as

a civic resource and amenity. It builds a community of trust around the space and can help highlight design changes that might be necessary. Communities love to gather around cultural activities: concerts, farmers markets, school events, sports leagues, fairs, dance classes, etc.

#### Post-Project Engagement

Engagement doesn't only have to occur only before a project to gather feedback about a project; it can also help to sustain a community's connection to a park or open space over the long term.

#### *Public Art Feedback*

Any artistic elements that will become permanent parts of a space should have their own engagement and feedback process. Although the artist should have ultimate creative control, the community can help define what values and issues matter, which gives the artist more creative direction. Feedback around public art will also help uncover more practical information, such as what might cause vandalism or where an element might impede on another activity.

#### *Long-Term Stewardship*

Parks live and breathe alongside their communities; creative activities can help ensure that members of the community feel connected to their parks and open spaces. This means developing ongoing support for programming and activation. Perhaps a local cultural organization can take over regular programming or a local CDC can provide social service opportunities.

#### **Whose voices?**

Community engagement is the right context to discuss a key question for anyone developing parks or park-based activities: whose voice matters? Equity, inclusion, and equality are important issues in communities; engage-

**Parks live and breathe alongside their communities; creative activities can help ensure that members of the community feels connected to their parks and open spaces.**

ment offers an opportunity to validate the importance of people and their voices.<sup>15</sup>

## PROGRAM AND PROJECT DESIGN

Delivering a creative placemaking project requires the same management skills as would any other project: budget setting, scheduling, delivery, and review. Project management isn't the focus of this *Field Guide*, except for emphasizing that every project has its own distinctive needs. Designing an effective project management structure should reflect this specificity and nuance.

#### **Design process**

Most capital projects, parks included, follow a typical design process organized around a series of phases. These phases include concept design, where overall concepts and ideas are brainstormed and refined; schematic design, where overall plan and programming layouts are refined; design development, where materiality and precision enter the plan; construction/contract documents, where legally binding design drawings to be used by a contractor are developed; and construction administration, where the design team supervises the construction process.

Creative placemaking initiatives fits into every step in this process. Ideally any artistic elements are considered part of the planning for every phase. For example, during the early phase, those public art pieces should be considered integral parts of the design and not as a separate design to be incorporated at a later part of the project. This alignment will ensure consonance with the overall themes of the project and that any technical challenges are addressed early.

In other instances, creative placemaking will be a tool to facilitate that process, such as artist-led community engagement or early site activation. These practices serve to make the design process more successful, such that the park becomes a reflection of the community's culture and that the community feels ownership of the space. Artists can help translate what can be a technocratic design process into something that feels human and personal, some-

15. "Dick & Rick: A Visual Primer for Social Impact Design," Equity Collective and Ping Zhu, accessed June 12, 2017, /<http://welcometocup.org/Projects/TechnicalAssistance/DickRick/>.

thing that feels like a cultural experience.

### **Maintenance planning**

Every creative exercise wants to maximize its willful, exuberant, and playful side and minimize its inhibitions, constraints, and realities. This tension unfairly burdens the design process because, in the world, stuff happens. Every creative project must balance these constraints; in fact, a good creative project benefits from these real-world limitations by using them as sources of inspiration and guidance.

Artwork, in the instance of a sculpture or mural, has its own “material” concerns that should be vetted throughout the design process. These include:

#### **Artwork Design Planning**

1. Will the work weather well in the location’s climate?
2. Will the work require excessive maintenance and repairs?
3. Will the work be subject to vandalism and graffiti?
4. Will the work alter its site in any negative ways?
5. Will the work require special site requirements burdensome to the overall project?
6. Does the work require special approval by a local agency or government?

A performance or temporary initiative, such as a pop-up food cart or a music stage, will have its own set of concerns:

#### **Artwork Maintenance Planning**

1. Will the temporary work leave permanent site damage?
2. Does the temporary work require excessive staff time and oversight?
3. Will the temporary work require difficult and excessive permitting?
4. Will the temporary work be disruptive to residents?
5. What infrastructure (electrical, water, etc) is necessary for the temporary event?

Creative placemaking activities, permanent or not, require more engagement than does the construction of a park or urban place done in a more everyday way. Many designers assume that a good idea can stand on its own merits, instead of exploring its repercussions. A public

sculpture requires regular maintenance and oversight; hosting a music festival takes a dedicated and organized staff. These future contingencies must be considered and discussed early in the design process.

In other instances, the park itself needs to change based on the desired cultural activities taking place. A call for artists might produce a proposal that the community loves, but requires changes to the park design’s circulation or infrastructure. In the ideal world, the artistic work is embedded into the design as an essential element.

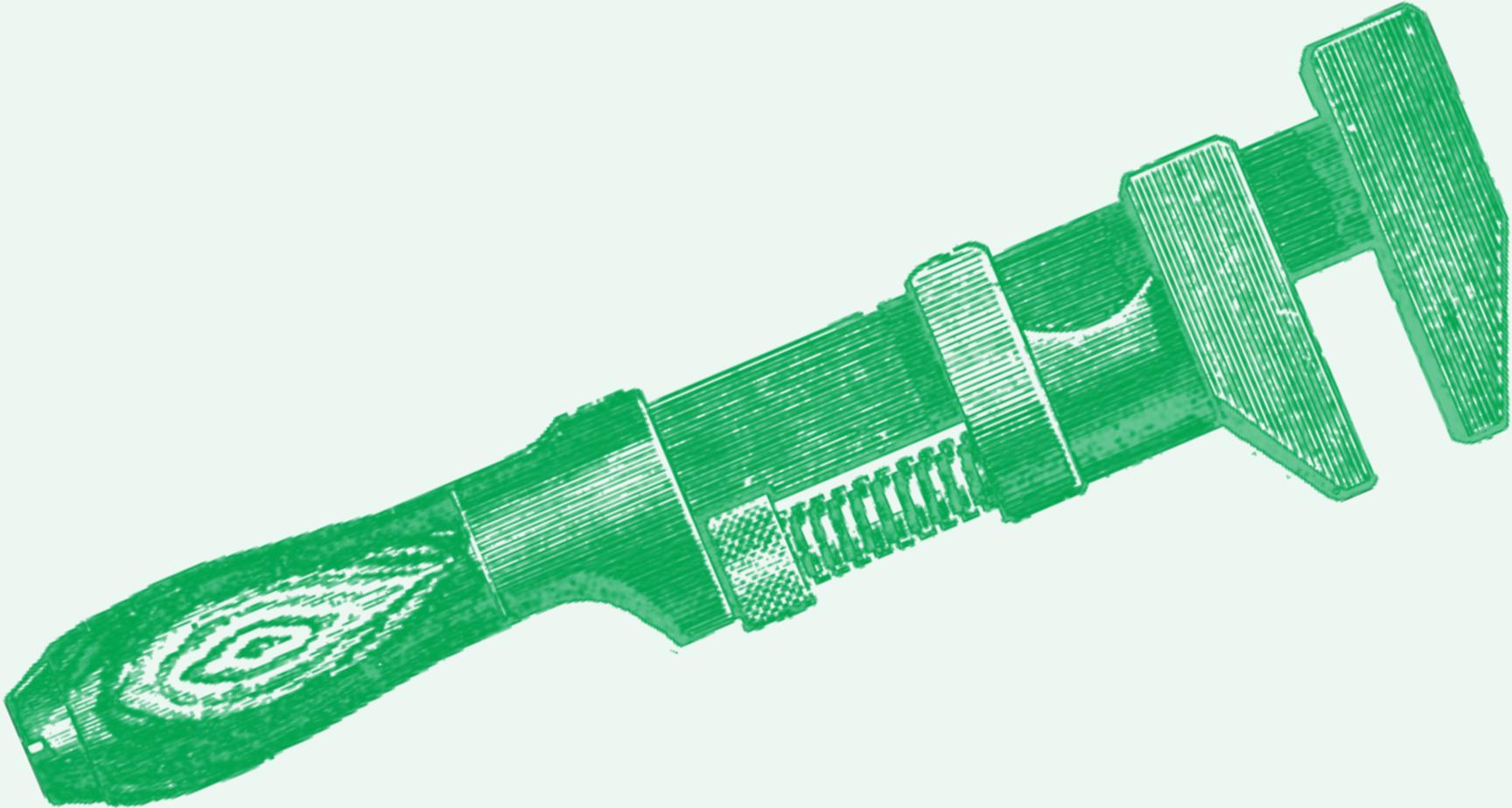
### **Construction, fabrication, and celebration**

After all the strategizing and planning, the realization of an artistic element can be a euphoric and beautiful moment. The team should celebrate this accomplishment.

Yet, the project team should be diligent in ensuring that the work reflects the goals originally defined by the team and that it meets all the technical requirements. The project team has every right to ensure the work conforms to the contract and to the proposal. For art projects, or even for experiences, the team can review the soundness of the proposed work through material samples, models, dress rehearsals, or run-throughs.

The community can also help to ensure the work is successful and make last-minute adjustments. They can serve as volunteer fabricators and assemblers, helping to strengthen the connection between place and product. Having local residents build pieces in a park significantly strengthens their sense of ownership over that place.

# SUSTAINING AND MAINTAINING



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SUSTAINING AND MAINTAINING

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To this point, creative placemaking in parks has been described in a linear, one-off process; rarely is this the case. Creative placemaking typically unfolds as a lengthier process with many activities and projects. This section describes the ongoing activities in a process that help build longevity and depth to any initiative of this kind. This ranges from stewarding the work over many years to replicating that work on other initiatives to evaluating the success of the work.

## STEWARDSHIP MODELS

Regardless of the creative placemaking activity, the project will require some level of stewardship planning. Who organizes for the care of a work of art or who continues programming in the park? Thankfully, these questions parallel the needs of every park and open space, a frequent topic in urban parks: how do you successfully steward spaces over the long-term? Creative placemaking, in most cases, should be embedded within those entities that are also taking care of parks and open spaces.<sup>16</sup>

Local governments and parks and recreation agencies often have a large role in overseeing the stewardship of a park or open space. This oversight can include regular maintenance, athletic and cultural programming, and regular capital investments. This work can often extend to include maintenance and repairs of works of art. (Frequently, other city agencies, such as a cultural affairs department, will have a public art division and can provide oversight and management.)

Like local parks agencies, nonprofit parks conservancies or land trusts operate as stewards of a space, making sure the trash is collected and that the park is well used. As a private entity, the conservancy can sometimes support programming and activation.

Local neighborhood groups, such as a community-development corporation, are well positioned to steward the creative placemaking activities in a park. With their place-based focus on community issues, CDCs will understand creative placemaking as a practice and will be inclined to support such activities in

16. The Trust for Public Land's Center for City Park Excellence and The City Parks Alliance have ample resources on their knowledge hubs about methods and means of park stewardship.

## EVALUATION

public places. These organizations do well at hosting regular events, concerts, festivals, markets, and other programming. Often, a partnership between a parks agency and a local CDC can result in a well-balanced stewardship strategy, with the former providing regular maintenance and the latter providing programming and community-focused activities.

One of the promising opportunities for creative placemaking is its ability to spur the creation of new organizations. Parks and open spaces greatly benefit from enhanced organizational capacity. If a creative placemaking activity—a concert, for instance—results in the need to develop more sophisticated management and the creation of a full-fledged organization, that benefits the park, the festival and the surrounding community. Ultimately, these organizations can hire locals, engage with the neighborhood, and build more sophisticated models of practice.

Evaluation is one of the most important aspects of creative placemaking, and perhaps one of the least practiced. The ability for the arts to make change in the world—to make an impact on our communities—is a truth that can feel largely based on intuition and trust. We intuit that the arts make us happier, connect us to others, and make us feel closer to place. But as creative placemaking becomes more “professionalized,” with funders and governments adopting it as an official policy agenda, there is new focus on validating the role of the arts in community development.

### Translation into an impact evaluation framework

As described earlier, evaluation structure can vary significantly based upon the type of project, established goals, and intended outcomes. While evaluation can be based on quantitative or qualitative evaluation—and often a mixture of both—a few principles are important to state upfront.

First, given the fluid nature of creative practices, defining what success looks like at the beginning of the project will

help to create more robust evaluation methods and results. This means that evaluation isn't about meeting the expectations of a funder or governing body, but about informing the team what worked and should be continued, what should be changed, and what should be stopped.

Second, creative placemaking projects have their own requirements for evaluation beyond say, the success of a park on its own terms. Often times arts-based strategies aim to address social cohesion, participation, belonging, or other types of outcomes. Care should be taken to differentiate, or at least to define, a parks-focused evaluation (is the park succeeding?) and a creative placemaking evaluation (did the arts-based strategy help deliver on the goals determined at the beginning?).

**Just as important as capturing these data and stories is the need to package and present this information in meaningful ways.**

The follow examples illustrate different examples of evaluation. However, each methods of evaluation can be used to gather quantitative or qualitative data. For example, a survey can gather data about participation or attendance, but it can also gather subject opinions and perspectives.

### **Quantitative**

Quantitative evaluations can help determine how a project helped create change before and after the intervention occurred. For example, after a new outdoor music program was started in a neighborhood park, attendance jumped 37 percent. Likewise, it could make comparisons to examples in other parts of the city or country. For example, when a local schoolyard hosted music programming, parents attended afterschool events at a 17 percent higher rate than did parents at other schools in the district.

This type of quantitative data can be collected in a variety of ways. Attendance numbers or observed participation can indicate the intensity of usage of a space or activity. Surveys and questionnaires can capture data before and after the intervention. Project teams should be thoughtful about who receives the questionnaire and what inferences are derived. Quantitative information can include:

### Direct Observation

This is a method for collecting information by viewing participants in a particular setting—in this case likely a park in which an intervention has taken place. In research and practice, a commonly used tool is the System for Observing Play and Recreation in Communities (SOPARC), which can provide information about park activity and characteristics.

### Tracking

This method involves an organization, typically the organization leading a set of events or a parks department that manages recreation programs, keeping track of the number of events held and potentially the number of people attending. Attendance numbers or observed participation can indicate the intensity of usage of a space or activity. The number of people participating in community engagement activities can also be tracked.

### Surveys

Surveys are important tools in social science research, and involve asking participants questions, often to obtain information about perceptions, insights, attitudes, or experiences. Project teams should be thoughtful about who receives the questionnaire and what inferences are derived.

Quantitative data can include information collected from individuals, at a community scale, or at even broader scales. This data can demonstrate the impact if collected before and after an intervention, can be more generalizable or standardized, and tends to be more precise.

### **Qualitative**

Qualitative evaluations tell another story about the success of a park or open space and a creative placemaking intervention. They allow for project teams to understand the human dimension of their work. Stories and anecdotes offer an accessible medium; interviewing nearby residents or park users reveals powerful stories that everyone can relate to and that offer a high degree of nuance.

Interviews can capture more than quantitative data; they can also capture stories and opinions. Going door-to-door or hosting community forums offers the chance to understand and act on this qualitative data.

For example, a community with strong Eastern European roots might talk about how a new Balkan food festival at a riverfront park has increased their sense of social cohesion. Such data is imprecise, but it provides valuable feedback. Qualitative information can include:

#### Interviews and Focus Groups

These involve a moderator or researcher interviewing an individual or bringing together a group to gain information about a specific issue. Questions should be standardized, and there are guidelines for the number of groups convened, the number of participants, and protocol for the moderator.

#### Oral Histories

These involve the collection of stories or historical information from people who have personal knowledge of either past events or conditions.



*Kids in the Park. 2016. Source: Dance Place.*

Evaluation and measurement takes time and commitment. These efforts will require staff time in the organization or a significant partnership with another organization. Many of the evaluation tactics described in previous sections are labor intensive but not terribly difficult. These present wonderful opportunities to hire local students or residents to conduct the surveys. This makes the evaluation a form of engagement itself.

Just as important as capturing these data and stories is the need to package and present this information in meaningful ways. While a funder might want to see a report about the impact, a local newspaper might like to write about some of the impacts from a narrative point of view. If the evaluation and analysis tells interesting stories, that work should be disseminated. Write a press release, contact local news outlets, publish a blog post, present at a local or national conference, write a list of key contacts, or hold a community event.

#### **Opportunities**

In an ideal world, these creative placemaking practices allow for these ideas and concepts to continue, expand, and improve (and for the gaps and challenges to be minimized). Success will often appear in the least of expected places. Creative placemaking, no matter how tightly planned, is a process that touches on culture and creativity; it's a winding pathway.

*And, this is good.*

These pathways open up new opportunities and new ways to see the world. Sometimes, errors will present themselves as creative opportunities to do something different. These elisions can become opportunities to develop new ways of thinking and doing.

Creative placemaking and parks have been natural allies; with even more intentional cultivation, these two practices can expand the cultural benefits of our public space.

# CASE STUDIES OF CREATIVE PLACEMAKING IN PARKS

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## How to Use

The eleven case studies in this *Field Guide* are organized by the type of park, which range from formal parks to pop-ups in open spaces. Each case study is then described in four parts as outlined below.

### Four Parts:

- A. **Geographic context.** The first section will describe the context for the project by explaining the history and the geography of the neighborhood, city, or region.
- B. **What were the goals?** Then, each case study will explain which community development goals were important and why creative placemaking in parks could address those goals.
- C. **Arts-based strategy.** Each case study is explained in terms of how it used the arts to help achieve that goal.
- D. **What happened?** Finally, the outcomes of the project are described. What can be learned from this project and applied to other parks and open spaces around the country?

## Traditional Parks

### 1. Boston Rose Kennedy Greenway

Example of high-profile initiatives in signature parks that create opportunities for that park to impact the community.

### 2. Pogo Park

Small parks and spaces that allow for a deeply nuanced reading of a community's needs and potential outcomes.

### 3. Governors Island Public Art

Projects that leverage a historical park in order to tell new and more complex stories about community.

## Informal Open Spaces

### 4. Better Block Project

Ad-hoc activities and events that occur on non-park spaces in order to create connections, to create needed assets, and to highlight important issues.

### 5. Dance Place

Reclaimed underutilized spaces adjacent to cultural institutions, bringing the spirit of the inside activities to a broader community.

### 6. Medical Mile

Example of shared programming in multiple spaces to support a larger narrative about a neighborhood or city.

### 7. Village of Arts and Humanities

Examples of projects that knit together spaces in a community around a shared sense of heritage and history.

### 8. Underpass Park

Identifying unique spaces and means to create opportunities for play, and putting those qualities in service of broader community development goals.

## Infrastructure

### 9. The 606

Taking advantage of underutilized public infrastructure and using culture to tell the stories of these possibilities.

### 10. The Fargo Project

Reconnecting people to water or rethinking how water is managed in the community as a cultural asset.

### 11. Buffalo Bayou

Creating unexpected moments of wilderness and reprieve in urban environments.

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# ROSE KENNEDY GREENWAY

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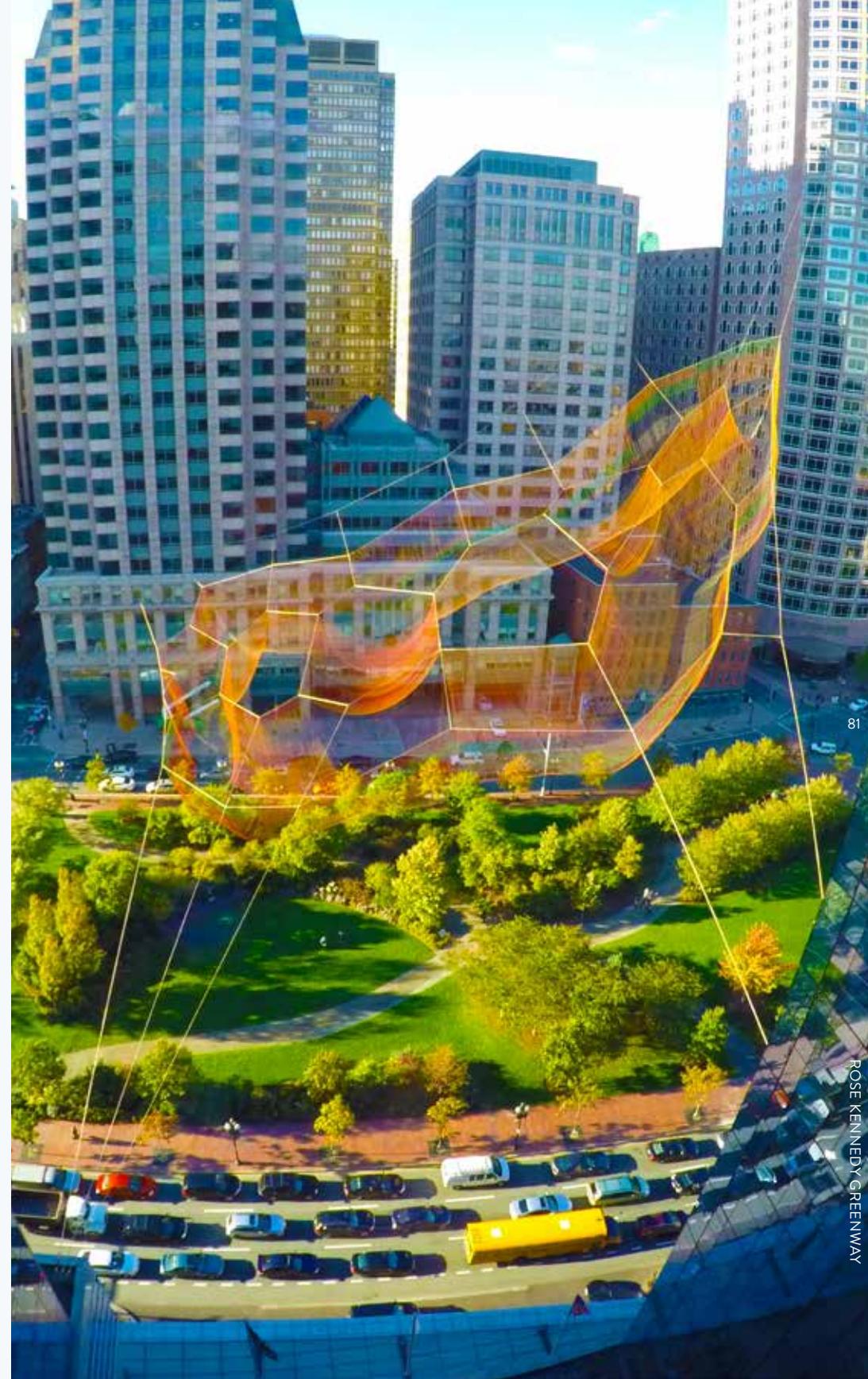
## Boston

### Park Type: *Signature Projects in Signature Parks*

Example of high-profile initiatives in signature parks that create opportunities for that park to impact the community.

#### Key lessons to look for:

1. A strong, **community-oriented master plan** for public art and cultural participation supports fundraising and implementation efforts.
2. Engaging **every kind of community group** paves the way for small successes to turn into bigger, more ambitious projects.
3. **Temporary art and installations allow for experimentation** and risk taking, both in content and form, and provides some freedom to explore what will resonate with the community.



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## Geographic context

The oft-repeated caricature of Boston as a “small city” bristles some, who point to the metropolitan region’s centers of learning, technology, science, health care, and finance. Others take pride in this provinciality, celebrating the extended roots of many families and sense of local familiarity. Irrespective of one’s perspective, the “Big Dig,” as the largest highway construction project in American history is called, one that buried an elevated highway through downtown, marks a moment when Boston “grew up.”<sup>17</sup> Its construction has spurred growth and optimism along the Boston Harbor and the South Boston Waterfront, with new mixed-use developments, parks, and institutions developed in the gaps of what used to be a large highway.

The Rose Kennedy Greenway, a new, signature park, was built on top of the new tunnel that carries thousands of cars daily. Over a mile long, this linear park comprises gardens, promenades, plazas, and other landscaped amenities. After building the new highway network, the Massachusetts Turnpike Authority turned the management of the park, via a long-term lease agreement, over to the Rose Fitzgerald Kennedy Greenway Conservancy, a new private nonprofit dedicated to managing, maintaining, and supporting the park.<sup>18</sup> The state legislature confirmed an initial 50 percent-50 percent funding model; the Conservancy now raises more than one private dollar as a match to every public dollar.

The Greenway has been termed the “People’s Park.” As one of downtown’s largest parks, one that complements Boston Common on downtown’s eastern edge, and as a vestige of the region’s most complicated construction project, nearly every Bostonian encounters the green space in some way. The park adjoins the diverse neighborhoods of Chinatown, Financial District, Waterfront, and North End, connecting them to one another and to the rest of the city. The Greenway, despite its immediate impact on contiguous neighborhoods, operates at the scale of the city and

the region; it is a true signature park in the nation’s most populated corridor.

## What were the goals?

The goal of the Rose Kennedy Greenway Public Art Plan was to build a sense of civic ownership for the park. After a decade of complicated, invasive, and disturbing construction, Bostonians were exhausted and, in some cases, skeptical of the massive project. Additionally, the park was a novel thing dropped into an existing urban fabric, and therefore many residents questioned whether it was developed with them in mind. The leadership of the Greenway quickly realized that it wasn’t enough to say, “Look at a what a great new park we have.” They would also have to find ways to connect this new urban asset with the diverse communities that surrounded it.

One of the Greenway Conservancy’s first steps was to develop partnerships with city officials, museums, local nonprofits, and community groups. These partnerships were valuable in building connections to local stakeholders, in helping to bring programming to the park, and in encouraging new funding streams. Many of these culturally based partnerships helped to support pop-up art installations. These installations proved to be the most successful way, thus far, of attracting the community to the Greenway.

This potency gave the Conservancy its initial idea about a more comprehensive arts-based strategy that could support community development work and build a long-term vision for the Rose Kennedy Greenway.

## Arts-based strategy

The Conservancy decided to undertake a Public Art Planning Process, led by arts professionals, that included feedback from a broad cross-section of stakeholders. The resulting Public Art Master Plan for the Rose Kennedy Greenway “bring[s] innovative and contemporary art to Boston through free, temporary exhibitions, engaging people in meaningful experiences, interactions, and dialogue with art and each other.” The plan had a five-year



Os Gemeas, *Boston Mural, or, The Giant of Boston*. 2012.

horizon and emphasized temporary and pop-up installations rather than permanent and fixed works.

The Public Art Planning Process not only was intended to define what kind of cultural expression should be reflected in the park, but also was structured as a process to engage the local community and build constituencies to support the park. For example, a Chinatown neighborhood group was excited about the opportunity to display works that reflected Chinese heritage and culture. Local arts institutions were enthusiastic about the opportunity to develop programming in the public realm that could reach a much broader audience.

### What happened?

The Public Art Plan became a successful touchstone for how Boston relates to the Rose Kennedy Greenway and how it thinks about culture in the public realm. The Conservancy's leaders created a flexible process that allowed them to adapt and learn as they experimented with projects and ideas. Because their group was nonpublic (albeit with public support), they had the flexibility to experiment and to do so knowing that they had the backing of the community. By having a clear plan and keeping it flexible, the Conservancy increased its capacity to raise money and was still able to test novel ideas and approaches.

The first fruits of this strategy were murals on the 76-by-70-foot wall of a building that abutted the park's Dewey Square. The first such mural, supported as part of a collaboration with the Institute of Contemporary Art (ICA), featured the Brazilian brothers Otavio and Gustavo Pandolfo, often known as Os Gemeos ("the twins") and their depiction of a "giant" child clothed in materials of eccentric patterns and textures, including a T-shirt wrapped around his head.

The character led to some backlash, as many claimed the figure represented a Muslim in a traditional hijab, prompting a statement from the ACLU in defense of the artistic expression. The executive director of the ICA

also defended the work, saying, "The ACLU supports exercising freedom of expression, and that's what the artists 'Os Gemeos' have done by getting a permit to create a mural depicting what the curator says is a little boy in pajamas with a shirt on his head."<sup>19</sup> In the end, the controversy became a positive, helping to create a public conversation around race, identity, and immigration. Because the artwork was temporary, the community didn't have to defend or attack something that might be "forever." As the work was being taken down for the next mural, many wanted it to stay because it had become a welcome presence along the Greenway.

The success of the mural program, filling a long-standing void of contemporary public art in Boston, led to confidence in the Greenway's art strategy and eventually to the blockbuster installation of Janet Echelman's *As If It Were Already Here*, a rope and knot sculpture hanging 600 feet in the air, suspended between three skyscrapers that border the Greenway. The approximately \$2 million installation involved a collaboration between many parties: the Conservancy, the artist, local community groups, building owners, designers, fabricators, and programmers.

While the project itself was hailed as a beautiful, thrilling addition to public space in the city, the Conservancy felt the effects of the project in many other ways. To complement the sculpture, the Greenway was populated with hammocks, seating and other temporary furniture. This welcoming environment brought record numbers of people to the park and helped them experience the sculpture in different ways. It also built muscle memory into these park goers, reminding them of how and when to use the park. They also began to realize the Rose Kennedy Greenway was more than just open space; it was also a reflection of the cultural identities of the city, a mirror to its pulses and dynamics.

These early wins helped the Rose Kennedy Greenway Conservancy advance and adapt its strategic plan. First, its leaders recognized the



(Clockwise from top left): Carolina Aragon, *High Tide*, 2016. Source: Matt Conti, courtesy of Rose Kennedy Greenway; Ai Wei-Wei, *Circle of Animals/Zodiac Heads*, 2016. Source: Rose Kennedy Greenway; Mehdi Ghadyanloo, *Spaces of Hope*, 2016. Source: Todd Mazer Photography and Rose Kennedy Greenway.

value in working very closely with the maintenance and operations staff to understand the technical challenges of temporary programming and art. This is not a sculpture park with means to care for public art. By respecting the physical challenges of such work first, they can keep taking risks and experimenting.

Additionally, the public “got” the art, and they reflected these messages in their own lives. There is a temptation for curators and other art experts to explain the meaning and intention of artistic works, especially if this involves nuanced themes about race, class, or identity. The public, the Conservancy learned, had an intuitive understanding of art and they proffered rich stories of what this work meant to them. Whether by posting reflections on social media or speaking up at an event, the public by and large took intellectual ownership of the work. These expressions of culture helped to facilitate difficult questions about community in ways that were not automatically polarizing or divisive.

- 86 The Conservancy was aggressive in developing a funding model that drew from diverse sources. This included dedicated state and

local funding, local foundations, and residents near the Greenway. The overwhelming success of the Public Art Strategy was largely due to the five-year plan. Instead of having to find funding for each project, the Conservancy had a well-formulated plan and a record of success that gave funders assurances and confidence.

The strength of that plan allowed for a full-time curatorial position, someone who can think strategically and tactfully about what art means for the Greenway. This position has allowed the art program to mature and develop, and to learn lessons that occur naturally over the course of the work. The current curator, Lucas Cowan, has helped the organization build institutional memory about the role of public art. That role has helped to navigate the complexities of undertaking public art in a park setting.

More important, the Rose Kennedy Greenway has walked with Boston into a new era, one characterized by confidence in its global aspirations, but without forgetting that the city is really a small town with a rich culture. Those twin identities have found expression in the Greenway and a way to continuously evolve.

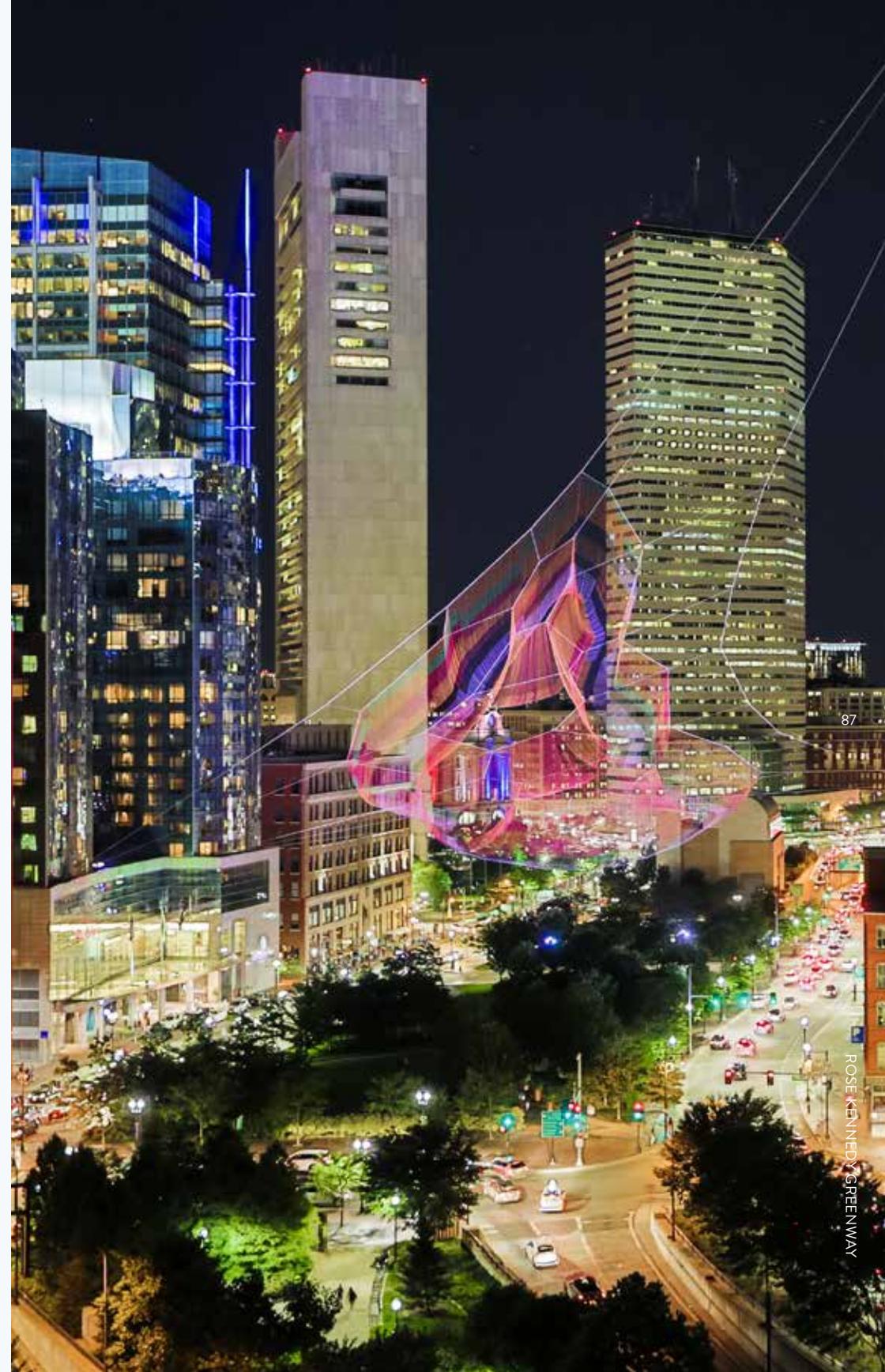


(Above): Mehdi Ghadyanloo, *Spaces of Hope*, 2016. Source: Rose Kennedy Greenway. (Opposite page): Janet Echelman, *As If It Were Already Here*. 2015. Source: Jovan Tanasijevic and Rose Kennedy Greenway.

17. “The Central Artery/Tunnel Project – The Big Dig,” Massachusetts Department of Transportation, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.massdot.state.ma.us/highway/TheBigDig.aspx>.

18. “Session Laws: Chapter 306 of the Acts of 2008,” *The 190th General Court of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts*, accessed June 12, 2017, <https://malegislature.gov/Laws/SessionLaws/Acts/2008/Chapter306>.

19. Phillipe Martin Chatelain, “Boston Street Art: Saying Goodbye to the ‘Giant’ by Os Gemeos in Dewey Square,” *Untapped Cities*, last modified August 12, 2013, <http://untappedcities.com/2013/08/13/boston-street-art-saying-goodbye-to-the-giant-by-os-gemeos-in-dewey-square/>.



# POGO PARK

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## Richmond, California

### Park Type: *Small Parks, Big Impact*

Small parks and spaces that allow for a deeply nuanced reading of a community's needs and potential outcomes.

#### Key lessons to look for:

1. **Arts are an equalizing, universal language** that allows and entices a wide range of stakeholder participation.
2. Parks projects cannot be done in isolation. They must “**repair the world around them.**”
3. **Collaborative design projects** can occur iteratively, using full-scale models, test fits, and mock-ups. Art doesn't have to be a final product; it can change and evolve.



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### Geographic context

Within the city of Richmond, California, Pogo Park and the Elm Street Playlot are located in a neighborhood called the Iron Triangle, known for devastating gun violence and being named the seventh most violent neighborhood in the country. The neighborhood also experiences the detrimental environmental effects of its bordering toxic oil refineries, which may expose residents to toxins in the air that could harm their health, cause asthma or create mental health issues.<sup>20</sup>

A third of families in the area live below the poverty line, and 46 percent of residents are unemployed. Children attend the poorest performing schools in the state of California. The population consists of 13,000 residents of which 61 percent are Latino, 24 percent are

Black, 7 percent are Asian, and 6 percent are Caucasian.

Many of the parks in this community are languishing and do not functionally offer opportunities for recreation, gathering, or celebration beyond their initial opening. As Toody Maher, a Richmond resident with a background as an artist and an entrepreneur, found in 2007 as she explored all 56 parks in her city, many needed reinvigoration and renovation.

Maher, who had long been interested in working on a city park renovation project, was particularly struck by eight small playlots in the city. Initially aiming to renovate Selano Playlot, the small lot closest to her house, she found that the Elm Street Play-lot in the Iron Triangle ended up capturing her attention,

especially after she met with city officials and explored the neighborhood. Maher then worked with the community and “fought for two years to change this small corner of a poor city’s poorest neighborhood through an organization she founded, Pogo Park.”<sup>21</sup>

### What were the goals?

This project intended to transform a physical space in a way that could have ripple effects throughout the community. It sought to use the park project as a catalytic entry point to addressing community concerns and needs in a comprehensive way.

The Elm Street Playlot was not on a main street and lacked visibility – both in real terms and in how the community perceived the space. Often, communities can feel that small lots or play spaces too easily become forgotten. This type of lot can also appear to be unsafe, and the permeating atmosphere of violence – due to the heavy use of drugs in the community, as well as high crime rates – keeps play spaces like this one from being used. The Pogo Park project integrated a variety of arts experiences and hands-on activities to help reclaim this underused public space and make it safer. A variety of arts and programs were needed to “activate” the sidewalks and support a vibrant pedestrian experience.

It was also hoped that the arts integration would help to address health disparities and help residents express and create their vision of a healthy, livable neighborhood. Throughout the project, through the pursuit of various art forms, Pogo Park hoped to engage – and ultimately empower – residents with the community. Arts were intended to engage residents, as they worked together to demonstrate their visions and desires for the reclaimed space. Arts helped to explain what activities they wanted to do there, as well as thoughtfully determine what amenities and features were needed to enable this. Furthermore, the activities sought to empower the local community through skill and capacity building, as well as providing opportunities to confront other complex and often contentious issues.

(Previous page): Pogo Park. Source: Pogo Park.

### Arts-based strategy

The park itself is a work of art. Every structure and element – from signage to fencing to sandboxes – was created through the lens of art. Everything was examined in the way it would be functional, beautiful, and in some way built or designed by the community.

To begin the design process, Maher infused her own money into the project. Once Pogo Park was established as a nonprofit, she wrote grant proposals, raised money from foundations, and solicited donations from community business owners. A \$30,000 contract from the city of Richmond was leveraged to start creating some of the planning documents for the play-lot transformation.

The park’s features demonstrate functional, public art. For instance, a recent installation mimics a mountain stream that uses a recycled water system with a UV system that makes the water safe and clean for children to play in. Through a grant from The Trust for Public Land, and with help from the city of Richmond and guidance from Scientific Art Studio, the Pogo Park team designed and built a large sandbox with a water feature; a 300-foot decorative perimeter fence; four carved benches, sanded and stained from re-claimed wood; and other hands-on features. Ultimately, a \$2 million grant was also awarded from the California Parks Department to transform the playlot in the vision defined by the community.

Not all pieces were permanent, as there are also low-cost, temporary installations such as fencing, murals, stump seating, and movable toys. While construction was scheduled to begin in summer 2013, Pogo Park worked with the community to create a “pop-up park” to beautify, activate, and maintain connection to and ownership of Elm Playlot.

The process, including mocking-up parks elements, to create the park was also one of deep creative and cultural value. When beginning the park design process, Maher



James Anderson. Source: Kristopher Skinner/Bay Area News Group.

worked to clear the lot so that it was almost a blank canvass. As a next step – and counter to traditional practices – the space was then “mocked up” in 3D. Instead of creating designs on paper, creating models at full scale helped to determine the placement, size, and function of the installations. One example was the creation of a fire pit. Maher visited the site with members of the community to construct a model of the fire pit out of cardboard. They brought in milk crates to model seating around the fire pit to experience how the space would be used before it was even built.

Several unique and intentional choices were made around the arts implementation. As much as possible, the pieces are handmade by members of the community. Community members, from many different backgrounds, were hired to support the construction of the park. Local artists were offered paid opportunities to work on the project. For instance, Pogo Park brought in some of the top graffiti artists in the Iron Triangle, effectively moving those artists from “underground” into the public sphere. Local metalsmiths, woodwork-

ing shops, and custom fabrication shops were all employed to create elements of the park, and all the installations are tailor-made for the space.

Another aspect of the creative expression at the site was the activity and programming led by Pogo Park’s staff, which included arts and crafts and homework help after school. This helped to create a safe and nurturing environment for children’s imaginative play and exploration.

### What happened?

The Elm Playlot has evolved into a community hub for recreation, activities, and services through art. Art is essential because it beautifies neighborhoods and creates a sense of pride among residents. Parks projects can serve as canvases for local artists to show their work and as places for residents to share their culture. The parks showcase various art forms, such as murals, hand-painted signage, graffiti art, mosaics, and sculptures. The incorporation of art serves to celebrate and foster creativity within a community.

An essential aspect of this work was bringing various stakeholders together – residents and city government - to work in a collaborative space. The community involvement and relationships built through this project helped to ensure that long-term maintenance and stewardship were continued. At the outset, Maher met with each member of the City Council and the city manager. The city manager gave the community the right to “adopt” the spot; although the lot would remain a city park, the community group pledged to maintain and run programming there. Attending Iron Triangle neighborhood council meetings, making a point of getting to know important figures in the community, and hiring people from that community were also key steps in building local relationships.

In addition, research about the impact of the park is being conducted. Methods such as Photovoice—a participatory, qualitative data collection method that integrates photography—were used to initially capture and distill the community’s vision.<sup>22</sup> The physical transformation of the space was essential, but staffing and creative programming can also be powerful for creating incremental change. For instance, seeing someone in the park every day – whether it was maintenance staff, an after-school program, or a park user, made it appear safer and drew more people to the park than otherwise would have gone. Pogo Park worked with researchers at the University of California, Berkeley to count the number of park visitors before and after the transformation, which revealed a 175 percent increase in users.

Community members, such as Richmond resident and Pogo Park collaborator Joe Griffin, who is pursuing his doctorate in public health at UC Berkeley, are planning to study the park and its intervention catchment area for impact. As Griffin described, Pogo Park is providing “real tangible results and points of celebration, where people could say, I feel like something is happening.”<sup>23</sup>

The Pogo Park project proves that parks do not exist in isolation, so their revitalization doesn’t either. To maintain the park and provide additional job opportunities, a series of part-time and full-time workers have been employed to ensure the features within the park are functional. Since the opening of the Elm Street Playlot, two new Iron Triangle parks opened in 2014 and have provided roughly 7,500 local children and their family members safe and inviting outdoor spaces to play and experience nature.

Pogo Park is also receiving requests from Richmond and other private sources to design and build children’s plays spaces in city parks and private properties. To enable this broadening of mission, Chevron’s eQuip Richmond initiative provided a \$1 million grant to create a social enterprise called Pogo Park Products. Through this, the park is not only providing invaluable recreation and gathering spaces, but is also finding new ways of providing jobs and skills. These parks and related efforts have the potential to help “repair the world around them” and catalyze even greater change.

20. Jane Kay and Cheryl Katz, “Pollution, Poverty and People of Color: Living with Industry,” *Scientific American*, last modified on June 4, 2012, // <https://www.scientificamerican.com/article/pollution-poverty-people-color-living-industry/>.

21. Heather Tirado Gilligan, “A Slow Park in Richmond,” *California Health Report*, last modified December 8, 2010, // <https://www.calhealthreport.org/2010/12/08/a-slow-park-in-richmond/>.

22. Pogo Park. “Photovoice.” *Pogopark.org*. Accessed June 28, 2017. <http://pogopark.org/photovoice/>.

23. Gilligan, “A Slow Park in Richmond.”



Pogo Park. Source: Pogo Park.

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# GOVERNORS ISLAND PUBLIC ART

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## New York

### **Park Type: *New Experiences in Historic Parks***

Projects that leverage a historic park to tell new and complex stories about its community.

#### **Key lessons to look for:**

1. A **willingness to be open** to diverse cultural groups and ways of expression can create parks that feel accessible to everyone.
2. Understanding the **diverse ways in which the community sees history** will help build support for challenging decisions about preservation.
3. **Informal and participatory cultural experiences** can pilot ideas as tests for more comprehensive artistic and development strategies. Slow going builds trust and excitement.



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## Geographic context

Paggank, or the Island of Nuts, so named for its bounty of hickory, oak, and chestnut trees, was the first beachhead for Dutch settlers to New York. The island is recognized as the birthplace of New York State. During the British Colonial period, the island was reserved for the use of the New York Colonial governors, and has since been called *Governors Island*. During the American Revolutionary war, Continental forces used the island as a defensive position against British ships attempting to enter the upper reaches of New York Harbor and capture the valuable territory of New York City. From 1783 until 1966, for 183 years, the island served as an outpost of the US Army, and from 1966 until 1996, as a Coast Guard station.

After the Coast Guard's departure left the island vacant, including two historic castles and battlements, the New York community entered a phase of exploring the island's future as a public asset. Eventually, through a complicated period of negotiations (and during the 9/11 terror attacks, which occurred nearby), the federal government sold to New York State and New York City the island, with a joint agreement with the National Park Service.

Eventually, in 2010, the city agreed to take full control of the island through The Trust for Governors Island, an organization that oversees the management and development of the site. Through an international design competition, a Dutch firm, West 8, was selected to imagine the island's future. Its proposal called for the careful demolition of historically insignificant buildings (many late-twentieth-century buildings had been developed on the island's southern half), the preservation of important historic structures, and the creation of new landscapes and green spaces.

While New York has no paucity of cultural assets and green space, the opportunity to define a regional asset like Governors Island was an important moment for the city. As an

island, it wasn't directly associated with any borough; it was in the middle of New York Harbor, a workhorse of New York's military past. The geography under design was the island itself, but based on this ambitious plan, the leaders of the project felt it should become an amenity for all of New York City.

## What were the goals?

When you find 172 acres in the middle of one of the densest and most populated urban centers in the world, how do you make it feel "of place" and relatable to the diversity that is New York? Even more, how do you persuade people from all over the city to travel by subway or bus, then by way of a ferry, to an island that was a decommissioned military installation?

The leaders of The Trust for Governors Island, and other community stakeholders, knew early on that arts and culture would be a key ingredient in the success of the entire enterprise. The intent of the new public space was not to make the island feel like a museum or historic site, even though the preserved structures and legacy would make up a large part of the experience. They wanted the park to feel alive and dynamic, a part of New York's cosmopolitan culture.

The renovation of the park would also take time, many phases over many years. During this long period of development, the island would be open to visitors and activities; this was not to be a "grand opening"-type milestone. This was a challenge – building excitement around a partially complete park – but it was also an opportunity to pilot new ideas and organizations. The success of the entire project would require training New Yorkers to think of this long inaccessible island as a public space that could become part of their summer rituals, just as would other places like Rockaway Beach, Central Park, and Coney Island.

## Arts-based strategy

To accomplish these goals, The Trust for Governors Island devised a multifaceted arts strategy that focused on opportunistic part-



Mark Handforth, *Painted Phone*. 2013. Source: Timothy Schenk, courtesy of The Trust for Governors Island.

nerships and local artistic practices, and tested these ideas slowly.

Three dimensions of this strategy can roughly describe these groups of activities. The first was a revolving public arts program, eventually called Art CommissionsGI, that brought diverse arts installations to the island for periods of varying lengths. The second included participatory cultural activities, such as housing local arts organizations in various historic buildings and the immensely popular Figment Arts event. Thirdly, The Trust for Governors Island partnered with the Lower Manhattan Cultural Council to host rotating artist residencies on the island, bringing diverse cultural producers to the space even when the crowds were absent.

Governors Island celebrated informality and openness. It took advantage of New York's longstanding position as a leader in cultural expression, whether that was a leader in global art market or an entrepot of worldly cultures. The Trust developed a strategy of inclusive artistic expression, blending cultural practices from the rich panoply of artists, cultural organizations, and community organizations in

the city. Aesthetic democracy is a term that has been used more than once in the context of Governors Island.

## What happened?

In 2009, the year before the city took full control of the island's management, the site received 275,000 visitors; seven years later, in 2016, the island saw a record-breaking 600,000 visitors, doubling the number of people who took the ferry to play, watch, eat, and learn. (As a point of comparison, Central Park receives between 400,000 to 500,000 visitors on an average summer weekend.) During the early part of that growth, a reporter described the presence of culture on the island:

*During the past few weeks I have seen a Dutch theater company perform; heard a festival of club dance music blast over a mock sand beach with a view of Lower Manhattan; watched jitterbugging island hoppers dance to a retro jazz orchestra and surveyed artworks ranging from the stupefyingly banal to the whimsically clever, displayed in some of the island's empty homes or along the sweeping waterfront.<sup>24</sup>*

Many visitors commented on heterodox and

populist bent of these expressions: open to any performers, artists, or organization, and tied intimately to participation and shared experiences. This openness played a substantial role in the visitor growth over the past eight years.

In 2014, the first phase of West 8's masterplan opened, followed in 2016 by the opening of The Hills, a handmade landscape of rolling, green mounds, some up to 70 feet tall. The Hills feature new amenities, including the longest slide in New York City and 54 species of vegetation. They were partially created using debris from demolished buildings on the island.

While parks draw people for their natural beauty and recreation, Governors Island owes its popularity and continued expansion in large part to these arts-based strategies and programming. The site is riddled with history and stunning views of Lower Manhattan, but many of the region's visitors know the island for its interesting programming and culture.

98 The Art CommissionGI program, now curated by Tom Eccles, executive director of Bard College's Center for Curatorial Studies, has created a forum for established contemporary artists to engage with the public spaces on the island. For example, in the 2014 inaugural season, the artist Mark Handforth, who typically works with objects in public spaces, installed four objects that teased out the tension between cityscapes and landscapes. The signature piece, a copper tree, lopped of its limbs, served as a cradle for an oversized baby-blue phone. The references to payphone and to street trees were equally cheeky and thought-provoking.

One of the early trailblazers for cultural activity is Figment, a free participatory arts event that allows emerging artists the chance to devise their own performance, activity, or other cultural expression. Figment encourages art practices that engage the audience and takes them outside the presumption that art happens only in a gallery with four white walls. The 2017 edition of Figment featured whimsical

activity such as ambient juggling, costume gifts, tiny-box theater, and a periscope maze. Figment supports willful knowing of our creative sides, whether we are participants or observers, and lets people enjoy that culture with the ability to appreciate and understand it on their own terms.

In 2016, the British artist Rachel Whiteread premiered her sculpture Cabin, nestled in the newly open Hills portion of the island. Through the negative space of a cabin in concrete, the piece was meant to consider the image of the cabin in the American consciousness, as a bucolic site of reflection in the vein of Thoreau's *Walden* or as a site of retreat from society, as in the Unabomber's infamous hideaway in Montana. As the landscaping around the cabin matures, the artwork will become more and more hidden, making an encounter with it more serendipitous over time.

The Lower Manhattan Cultural Council's Artist Residency programs have brought hundreds of artists to the island to work and practice, many in open studios. The residencies give artists the space to complete important work in a retreat-like setting that is still proximate to New York City. These artists become active members of the island's community and inject important perspectives into the conversation about the park's future.

Overall, the arts-based community development strategies benefit from diversity and openness. Not satisfied with "just" public art, the leaders of Governors Island recognized the need for radical inclusion and participation. Any cultural organization or artist was welcome, in some form or venue, to use the site as a place for experimentation. That openness has been reflected in diversity of the island's visitors, coming from every borough and throughout the metropolitan region.

24. Edward Rothstein, "A Playground for the Arts, With Island Breezes," *The New York Times*, last modified August 12, 2010, <http://www.nytimes.com/2010/08/13/arts/13governors.html>.



(top left): Mark Handforth, *Yankee Hanger*. 2013. Source: Timothy Schenk, courtesy of The Trust for Governors Island. 2013; (top right) Figment Festival. 2008. Source: Jaki Levy; (middle top and left): Figment Festival. 2009. Source: emilydickinsonridesabmx; (middle right): *The Hills*. Source: The Trust for Governors Island. (bottom): Figment Festival Welcome. Source: The Trust for Governors Island Welcome Center. Source: courtest of The Trust for Governors Island.

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# BETTER BLOCK PROJECT

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100 **Oak Cliff, Texas, and elsewhere**

## **Park Type: Pop-ups**

Ad-hoc activities and events that occur on non-park public spaces to create social connections, to create needed assets, and to highlight important issues.

### **Key lessons to look for:**

1. Instead of waiting years for improvements to streetscapes and public spaces, **quick interventions** can identify opportunities and jumpstart revitalization pathways.
2. By considering the **intervention itself to be a work of art**, the community can feel connected to the design, execution, and enjoyment of public infrastructure.
3. **Social connectivity and cohesion**, while often not the original goal of the project, can become the most lasting effect of these tactical interventions.



## Geographic context

Oak Cliff, Texas, located just southwest of downtown Dallas, has ample hills and verdant landscaping, forcing many of its roads and former streetcar lines to track through the town in sinuous curves. Dallas annexed this suburb in 1903, after consternation among its city leaders. Nevertheless, Oak Cliff has retained a strong sense of identity and place.

No such feature has given Oak Cliff a bigger sense of self than the Texas Theatre, once the largest suburban movie house in Dallas. Lee Harvey Oswald, the accused assassin of President Kennedy, was arrested there in the early afternoon of November 22, 1963, shortly after numerous residents said they saw him shoot Police Officer J.D. Tippit, who had been responding to calls to secure downtown Oak Cliff. The historic nature of the building has helped it weather storms of economic decline; it was restored for Oliver Stone's film, *JFK* and received money from various historic-minded nonprofits.

102 Other storefronts and businesses, with less notoriety, have not fared as well, suffering from the removal of the important streetcar connection, economic disinvestment, and suburban zoning patterns. These historic downtown thoroughfares were characterized by vacant storefronts and felt disconnected from the everyday lives of the neighborhood's residents.

## What were the goals?

The Better Block Project emerged from a desire to reimagine streetscapes as urban places where people could gather together, patronize local businesses, and sustain long-term development. The public policies of Dallas no longer reflected the ways in which people wanted to live in the 21st century. Efforts to improve corridors and vacant lots were stymied by copious parking requirements for new developments, exorbitant fees and forms for temporary events, and byzantine bureaucracy for simple site improvements such as flowers and benches.

These goals coalesced around a broader strategy of corridor revitalization: focusing on a high need, high-opportunity corridor in the center of Oak Cliff. These corridors were too fast, too wide, too car-focused. Residents wanted places to gather collectively; they wanted small businesses to thrive where they once did, and they wanted places to meet and engage with other people. While Oak Cliff is a relatively park-rich area, it didn't have places to gather with intentionality and with purpose. Parks were for passive recreation and sports; the community wanted a place that felt cultural and vital.

## Arts-based strategy

Jason Roberts, an Oak Cliff IT consultant and musician, had worked on urban issues in the past, and wanted to see a change in his section of the city, on the once-thriving Tyler Street. He and a group of enterprising neighbors conceived of the idea of a "living block art installation," a kind of full scale artistic project. Instead of seeing "art" as those objects or performances that are placed in spaces, Roberts and his group thought of a temporary intervention on the block as an arts project unto itself. The community was the artist and the street was the canvas. Instead of waiting for private interests to reinvest in urban areas, locals focused on using art to do it themselves.

Roberts describes the process as "reverse-engineering" what a great block looks like; start from an ideal image or another neighborhood and figure out what it would take to get there. The team in Oak Cliff looked at what worked in other neighborhoods and devised ways to recreate those fundamentals in cheap ways.

This team-based mentality was important in the project delivery. Everyone brought expertise that could be deployed thoughtfully in the one-block section of Tyler Street, including an urban planner designing painted bike lanes and someone in the food industry setting up a coffee shop. All in all, the first "Better Block Project" included historic street furniture, children's art studios, craft



(Above all): Better Block II - Dallas, 2010. Source: A Better Block.

stores, flower shops, and outdoor dining. This kind of “tactical urbanism” has become an important tool for planners around the world; it demonstrates the efficacy of a great idea in a temporary, quick way, without the same worry of negative consequences and risks that long-term solutions create.

The project team had an aggressively DIY motto and limited the need for much funding. Where possible, it crowd-sourced materials, expertise, and labor. It used borrowed equipment and props. The philosophy became, “Borrow, build, then buy” - (borrow it first; if not that, build it; and if not that, then and only then, buy). Team members also constrained themselves with regards to their mission. They didn’t lose focus on the overall goal of the project, which was about public space and corridor revitalization. They didn’t let other issues, such as obesity, municipal funding, or healthy eating, cloud the clarity of their intervention. Although the Better Block had the potential to positively transform many aspects of the community’s life, the group felt that remaining consistent in their motivations would help advance their overall goals.

Finally, the group knew that the city’s regulations and permits for temporary interventions like this would limit the full extent of their creative potential. They developed a few strategies to work around these limitations. For example, they took advantage of permits and licenses for an existing arts festival, the Oak Cliff Art Crawl. Additionally, when it wasn’t immediately clear when regulations were required, they decided to not ask too many questions of city officials, for fear of being faced with an uncertainty that could become a “no.”<sup>25</sup> At the event, the organizers printed the zoning code provisions and ordinances that they were violating during the event to show the community “how a 70-year-old municipal zoning code was preventing neighborhood vitality.”<sup>26</sup>

## What happened?

The outcomes of the Better Block project can be described in two ways. First, the project

was a tremendous and nearly immediate success. Leaders from the community and the municipality immediately saw the positive impact that bike lanes, temporary furniture and storefront activation made on the area. A host of city ordinances were changed in record time, bike lanes were added to a city bike plan, and a pop-up business became a permanent part of the streetscape. Years later, that streetscape is still welcoming new businesses and opportunities.

The project also raised the awareness of resident participation and the arts as important and underexplored tools in community development. The project had the effect of raising the expectations of the participatory governance and showed developers how human-focused arts can make for better places.

Secondly, the Better Block idea was so successful that Roberts transformed it into a nonprofit organization that advocates for similar interventions around the world. He has framed this organization as an “open-source project” that can be downloaded, used, and built upon. Their website features modular street furniture and Better Block plans.<sup>27</sup>

In cities, towns, and villages, the idea of the street has changed dramatically over time and transportation has changed as well. Undoubtedly, the streetscape has been and will continue to be part of the public realm, serving as a connection to and extension of our public parks and open spaces. Better Block confirms that by proactively demonstrating the potential for these corridors to remain people focused, streets will continue to serve the needs of communities for decades to come.

25. The Field Guide does not advocate breaking municipal codes and ordinances. Every group has to weigh its own sense of risk and opportunity when undertaking informal, public activities.

26. Lydon, Mike, and Anthony Garcia. “A Tactical Urbanism How-To.” *Tactical Urbanism*. Island Press/Center for Resource Economics, (2015): 171-208.

27. For more, see Better Block Foundation, [www.betterblock.org](http://www.betterblock.org).



(Above all): Better Block Akron, 2015. Source: A Better Block.

# DANCE PLACE - 8<sup>TH</sup> STREET ARTS PARK

106 Washington, DC

## Park Type: *Inside/Outside*

Reclaimed underused spaces adjacent to cultural institutions, bringing the spirit of the inside activities to a broader community.

## Key lessons to look for:

1. Cultural organizations can transform communities and people by bringing their **artistic practices into the public realm**.
2. Being **cognizant of the requirements and restrictions** of stakeholders and engaging them appropriately throughout the process is essential.
3. **Stewarding cultural activities** in public space takes time and dedication; building manageable funding and staffing plans is critical.



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## Geographic context

Nestled in the northeast quadrant of Washington, DC, is the Brookland neighborhood. The neighborhood dates to the 1800s, and development was strongly influenced by the events of the time, including the Civil War.<sup>28</sup> Many religious establishments also settled in the neighborhood, and residential development boomed after World War II.

Today, 30 percent of Brookland residents live below the poverty line and 51 percent of children live in poverty. High levels of unemployment are a major concern, where rates in Brookland are double the rest of the District. The neighborhood is predominantly African American and is more homogeneous than the rest of Washington in that regard.

Dance Place is a neighborhood cultural center headquartered in Brookland. The center curates and hosts a 45-week presenting season, runs a dance school, and offers community arts and dance programming. Dance Place has been working in the neighborhood for thirty years, offering rigorous programming in Brookland, in partnership with various schools in the area, and to serve communities in Washington, DC, Virginia, and Maryland.

In 2009, the DC Department of Housing and Community Development set its focus on creating affordable housing in Brookland, with a focus on housing for artists. In partnership with Dance Place, the department created affordable live/work artist spaces known as Brookland Artspace Lofts, on the lot adjacent to Dance Place's center.

## What were the goals?

Dance Place's core mission has been to build a community through high-quality performances, commissions, training and educational programs for audiences of all ages and abilities.<sup>29</sup> Carla Perlo, Dance Place's founding director, has been the long-term force behind the organization's artistic excellence; her vision saw a new goal: that of taking that artistry into the community around their building.

(Previous page): Basketball on Arts Park. 2016. Source: Dance Place.

Although there are parks and green spaces within the neighborhood, not all are obviously public. An alleyway, owned by the city and protected as a right-of-way for the Metro system, lay between Dance Place's building and the new housing complex – and presented itself as an opportunity to create and activate a vacant lot for public use.

Overall, Dance Place sought to take advantage of this opportunity to activate the neighborhood through programming that is interactive and open to all. This work also related to other community concerns. Given high levels of crime in the Brookland area, dance, programming, and park creation were fused to ensure that public life took a stronghold in the neighborhood and dissuaded activity that made the area feel unsafe. Also, like many neighborhoods in Washington, DC, Brookland is experiencing high levels of new development. With existing fears of displacement, this project provided a positive interaction and model for public space improvements that offer benefits to existing residents.

The goal of this effort was to build upon public investment – in this case, an artist affordable housing project – to advocate for investments to revitalize otherwise underused open, vacant spaces. As described in a local paper, “Perlo ... and her colleagues hope that the park will be a natural extension of their organization's artistic and community programming.”<sup>30</sup>

## Arts-based strategy

Dance Place took responsibility for funding this asphalt-covered, vacant alleyway and transforming it into a public park. Dance Place has led the development, taking part in designing the park, and now overseeing the maintenance of the park, as well as the funding for the arts that take place in or because of this space. Named 8th Street Arts Park, it opened in 2016 and is considered the final phase of Dance Place's arts campus.

The Dance Place and 8th Street Park story involves three key components. The first was an expansion of Dance Place's own building, the



Balance Harmony. 2016. Source: Jack Gordon, courtesy of Dance Place.

second was the artist's lofts, and the third was the creation of an arts park on the public land between the two buildings. Together, these elements created a powerful “arts campus” in Brookland.

To create this campus, a community-based design process was employed. Dance Place, as an organization whose lifeblood was engagement with a diverse population through creative practices, helped to facilitate this work. To begin, a volunteer steering committee of artists, business owners, civic association leaders, and government representatives was convened. This group held monthly meetings to solicit ideas for programming and art ideas.

As part of these efforts, graffiti artists were employed to bring design ideas to life. This art also helped to inform designs from a landscape architecture company (which offered most its services pro bono). Throughout, community input was solicited to prioritize design elements. Cognizant of limitations and barriers to participation (such as limited access to computers), the team conducted surveys in a variety of ways, including online and in print.

A subcommittee then helped select contractors to implement the ideas, and a first round of public art commissions was selected. To support implementation, funding was obtained through crowd-sourcing (which raised about \$20,000 from individuals), gifts from local companies, foundations, and local and federal government. For instance, the Kresge Foundation awarded a \$500,000 grant for the development of the arts park.

The park on 8th Street was intended to be as rich as the Dance Place itself, offering a diverse set of opportunities to audiences and providing commission to local artists. The 8th Street Park events include dance classes, music concerts, dance presentations, gardens, and arts creation events. The partnerships developed throughout the campus expansion also benefited the increased variation of activity taking place in the art campus space. As an example, Dance Place worked with the DC Department of Energy and Environment to offer a garden club and related youth/community classes.

The arts campus, and the precedent it set of expanding arts beyond the walls of an organi-

zation's center, continued to grow throughout this project. The NEA provided a two-year grant to expand programs from the park to other places along 8th Street. The DC Office of Planning also awarded Dance Place a grant that allowed its team to create temporary projects around the city, which further developed a model for hosting programming events outside of their space.

### What happened?

The expansion of Dance Place's campus to the adjacent alleyway has created a new, artistic, playable green space, available for use by more of the local community. The dance and arts and crafts workshops have engaged the community with public space, and served to physically revitalize and enliven these places, bringing neighbors together. Poignantly, 8th Street is also the area's "first community park built by neighbors, for neighbors."

The process to create this park space required the collaboration of key stakeholders, including several government departments. These relationships, particularly with local government, can be time intensive but are essential and fruitful. Keeping this engagement was consistent and intentional throughout ensured that support and funding were available for

both physical improvements and ongoing programming.

Today, Dance Place serves over 13,000 people annually through diverse programming that takes place in the traditional indoor spaces, as well as in the community center and in the 8th Street Arts Park. More than 1,000 artists are hired and paid to present, and Dance Place hires forty artists as teachers for the educational programming. Many of the presentations and associated artists reflect local cultures, but Dance Place also brings in touring companies and international artists, which many community members would not have an opportunity to experience otherwise.

As the Arts Campus thrives in its fullest realization, the leaders of Dance Place have started to plan for the long-term success and stewardship of this grand idea. The idea to create this park was exciting and improvisational. Now the organization is building long-term plans to ensure the success of its artistic mission, the park, and the deep relationships it has built with the community.

The 8th Street Arts Park has brought culture from inside the walls of the cultural institution to the outside, figuratively and literally.

28. "Brookland/Edgewood Investment Plan," *Neighborhood Investment Fund*, Government of the District of Columbia, accessed June 12, 2017, <https://planning.dc.gov/sites/default/files/dc/sites/op/publication/attachments/Brookland-Edgewood.pdf>.

29. Dance Place, "Greater Washington Catalogue for Philanthropy," accessed June 12, 2017, <https://www.cfp-dc.org/nonprofits/1278/Dance-Place/>.

30. Quinn Myers, "An 'Arts Park' is Coming to Brookland," *Washington City Paper*, accessed June 30, 2017, <http://www.washingtoncitypaper.com/arts/blog/13082922/an-arts-park-is-coming-to-brookland/>.



# MEDICAL MILE



Medical Mile. Source: American Trails

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## Little Rock, Arkansas

### Park Type: *Public realm activation*

Example of shared programming in multiple spaces to support a larger narrative about a neighborhood or city.

#### Key lessons to look for:

1. Culture can make apparent the connections between a **network of community spaces** and resources.
2. Arts and cultural elements can be used to highlight, raise awareness, and **elicit change in broad social concerns and goals**, such as public health.
3. **Partnerships with social service organizations** can provide additional vision, funding, and support and can inspire future projects.

### Geographic context

Little Rock, the capital of and largest city in Arkansas, has close ties and immense pride in its relationship to the natural resources. As an essential driver of the city's early growth in the 1800s, the Arkansas River and other environmental resources have continued to provide a sense of pride for residents. While the vision of a "city in a park" has a long provenance, only one park existed in the city until 1920, and an updated parks master plan was not completed between 1913 and 1983.

In 2000, the city convened a citizen group to craft a comprehensive vision for Little Rock. At the same time, Little Rock Parks and Recreation began the process of creating a new parks master plan. The linkage of the existing recreational system, coupled with the mission to "maximize the benefits of new facilities for all members of the community," provided a framework for the master plan. A key development concept was "the three-trail loop concept," now known as the Arkansas River Trail, a 17-mile proposed trail to connect the

parks system's existing network and highlight the city's relationship to the Arkansas River.

However, as they were developed simultaneously, broad issues impacting quality of life began to emerge in both the comprehensive plan and the park master planning effort. For instance, the proposed parks projects, including the Arkansas River Trail, intended to create strong neighborhoods through visual and physical access to a range of recreational and tourist amenities and to "strengthen the fabric of city life through a healthy and viable cultural life as demonstrated by the important role played by the cultural community in enhancing livability, access, opportunities for life-long learning."

In 2003, a \$1.9 million bond was issued to begin the Arkansas River Trail development. The same year, Arkansas became one of the first states to introduce and pass visionary and comprehensive legislation to address childhood obesity, a move born out of a couple of health-focused conferences the

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year before.<sup>31</sup> Though the act was primarily focused on school interventions, community health promotion clearly emerged as a priority around the state.

Recognizing the poor health conditions – in the late 1990s Arkansas ranked as the fifth highest state in overall rate of preventable diseases – as well as the cultural and social factors involved with behaviors from over-eating to physical activity, a group of partners began to advocate for a public space that provided not only opportunities for healthy lifestyles, but also inspiration about these choices.<sup>32</sup> This partnership led to the creation of the Arkansas River Trail's centerpiece, now referred to as the Medical Mile, which is in Riverfront Park, adjacent to the William J. Clinton Presidential Library and Museum, and in Arkansas' most prominent commercial and recreational district.

### What were the goals?

Though the park master planning effort sought to provide recreational access to residents and increasing tourism, it quickly became apparent that health and wellness were central to community quality of life. Moreover, not only were the serious and expensive health concerns facing the local community due to a lack of access to opportunities to exercise or access to healthy foods, but a significant lack of awareness also hindered any efforts to improve health outcomes.

The Medical Mile is the unique health-centric gathering space, and it was meant to be a space for exploring how artistic visual and interpretive elements could be designed to “inspire, delight, and motivate people to make wellness-oriented lifestyle changes.” As once noted by Dr. Eleanor Kennedy of Heart Clinic Arkansas, the Medical Mile was “a way to give back to the community by offering citizens a safe and accessible place to exercise and by encouraging a more healthy lifestyle.”<sup>33</sup>

Project partners - including Heart Clinic Arkansas; the Little Rock Parks and Recreation; and the National Park Service Rivers, Trails,

and Conservation Assistance Program - rallied around the Medical Mile as an opportunity to highlight achievable, exciting, and relevant ways to combat chronic disease through lifestyle changes. Ultimately, the themes of exercise, smoking cessation, and better nutrition were identified as the highest priority by the Arkansas Department of Health.<sup>34</sup>

### Arts-based strategy

The trail development bond passed in mid-2003, but a significant funding gap remained. Later that year, Heart Clinic Arkansas voted to raise \$350,000 over two years to help the parks and recreation department fund the Medical Mile. The clinic, with additional support from major hospitals, the Arkansas Department of Health, and many individual physicians, ultimately reached a stretch fundraising goal of \$2.1 million.<sup>35</sup>

To excite the public and meaningfully provide the stimulus that project partners hoped to achieve, artist Debra Moseley-Lord was engaged to design art for a 1,300-foot wall along the trail. Moseley-Lord had extensive experience with producing public art in Arkansas, but also had an expertise in visually exciting displays, gained through her work as an art director for a special events production company. As the artist describes, she chose to create art that was well spaced and simple, but visually compelling.<sup>36</sup> Leading project partners away from installing elements that were more akin to advertisements for health-related services, she helped to design and create public artworks that integrate health reminders and health-supportive amenities (such as lights and water fountains).

The Medical Mile not only features opportunities for physical activity and recreation – running, skating, walking, and cycling – but also offers education and inspiration about wellness through arts elements such as a three-dimensional mural wall and a “Body-Mind-Spirit” entry plaza. Each element is intended to inform and inspire visitors as they explore the Medical Mile path toward improved health.



Medical Mile. Source: American Trails

### What happened?

The Medical Mile is the “nation’s first outdoor linear health museum,” which uses arts and architecture to make clear the connection between lifestyle choices and disease. The visceral nature of this connection, created through the arts elements, helps to establish the Arkansas River Trail System as a tribute to outdoor recreation, as well as to wellness and vitality. As described by the National Trails Training Partnership, “over two million people from around the world visit the area each year. The Medical Mile gives a positive impression of a city dedicated to the health and wellness of its citizens.”

Today, Pulaski County, where Little Rock is the county seat, is ranked 11th of the 75 counties in Arkansas – a significant increase from its 31st ranking in 2011.<sup>37</sup> In 2012, almost 43 percent of adults achieved National Physical Activity standards, and this has continued to improve over time.<sup>38</sup> Over a quarter of adults are also consuming recommended levels of

fruit and vegetables. However, while childhood obesity has appeared to have plateaued, adult obesity rates in Arkansas have continued to rise. Though work remains, Little Rock’s improvements are notable and ongoing – and the Medical Mile provided an innovative way for healthcare providers to act in their own communities. The Medical Mile remains an important example for bringing health into the places where people live, work, and play.

The partnerships, creative financing, advocacy and education, and integration of arts and cultural expression are helping to maintain Little Rock’s “city in a park” vision. Recreational, cultural, and educational opportunities continue to be a strategy maintaining quality of life within the city, with ongoing Arkansas River Trail expansion being a key component of this. The City recently applied for a grant to create a new ramp/entry point that will expand the user groups able to use the facility and make the experience more pleasant.

Also within the city of Little Rock, demand for artistic gathering places continues to grow, as does the connection between the arts and other disciplines to focus attention on important public issues. Public Works has followed Parks and Recreation's lead to integrate arts into its storm drain maintenance and public outreach.

Beyond the city, the success of the Arkansas River Trail and Miracle Mile has become the catalyst for the development of healthful trails in the entire metropolitan area. A memorandum of understanding was signed on June 1, 2012 to establish the greater 88-mile Arkansas River Trail System. As Jim McKenzie, executive director of Metroplan, said, "This trail system has received national recognition and will hopefully attract the millennial generation who are looking to start families and careers in environments with creative amenities."



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31. Jim Raczynski, Joe Thompson, and Herschel Cleveland, "Experience of Arkansas Act 1220 of 2003 to Reduce Childhood Obesity," *Active Living Research*, accessed June 12, 2017, [http://activelivingresearch.org/files/Award\\_Winners.pdf](http://activelivingresearch.org/files/Award_Winners.pdf).

32. Loel Solomon, Robin Omata, and Robert St. Peter, "Health System Change in Little Rock, Arkansas," *Center for Studying Health System Change*, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://hschange.org/CONTENT/218/index.html>.

33. Terry Eastin, "The Medical Mile Premise," *National Trails Training Partnership*, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/health/medmile06.html>.

34. Peter Harnik and Ben Welle, "From Fitness Zones to the Medical Mile: How Urban Park Systems Can Best Promote Health and Wellness," *The Trust for Public Land*, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://cloud.tpl.org/pubs/cpe-health-promoting-parks-rpt.pdf>.

35. Park Prescriptions: Profiles and Resources for Good Health from the Great Outdoors," *Golden Gate National Parks Conservancy*, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.parksconservancy.org/assets/programs/igg/pdfs/park-prescriptions-2010.pdf>.

36. Debra Moseley-Lord, "Art and Health," *National Trails Partnership*, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.americantrails.org/resources/art/medmileart.html>.

37. *County Health Rankings*, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://www.countyhealthrankings.org/app/arkansas/2016/rankings/pulaski/county/outcomes/overall/snapshot>.

38. "Arkansas: State Nutrition, Physical Activity, and Obesity Profile," *Center for Disease Control*, accessed June 12, 2017, <https://www.cdc.gov/obesity/stateprograms/fundedstates/pdf/arkansas-state-profile.pdf>.

MEDICAL MILE

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MEDICAL MILE

(Above): *Medical Mile*. Source: Little Rock Convention & Visitors Bureau; (below): *Medical Mile*. Source: American Trails.

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# VILLAGE OF ARTS AND HUMANITIES

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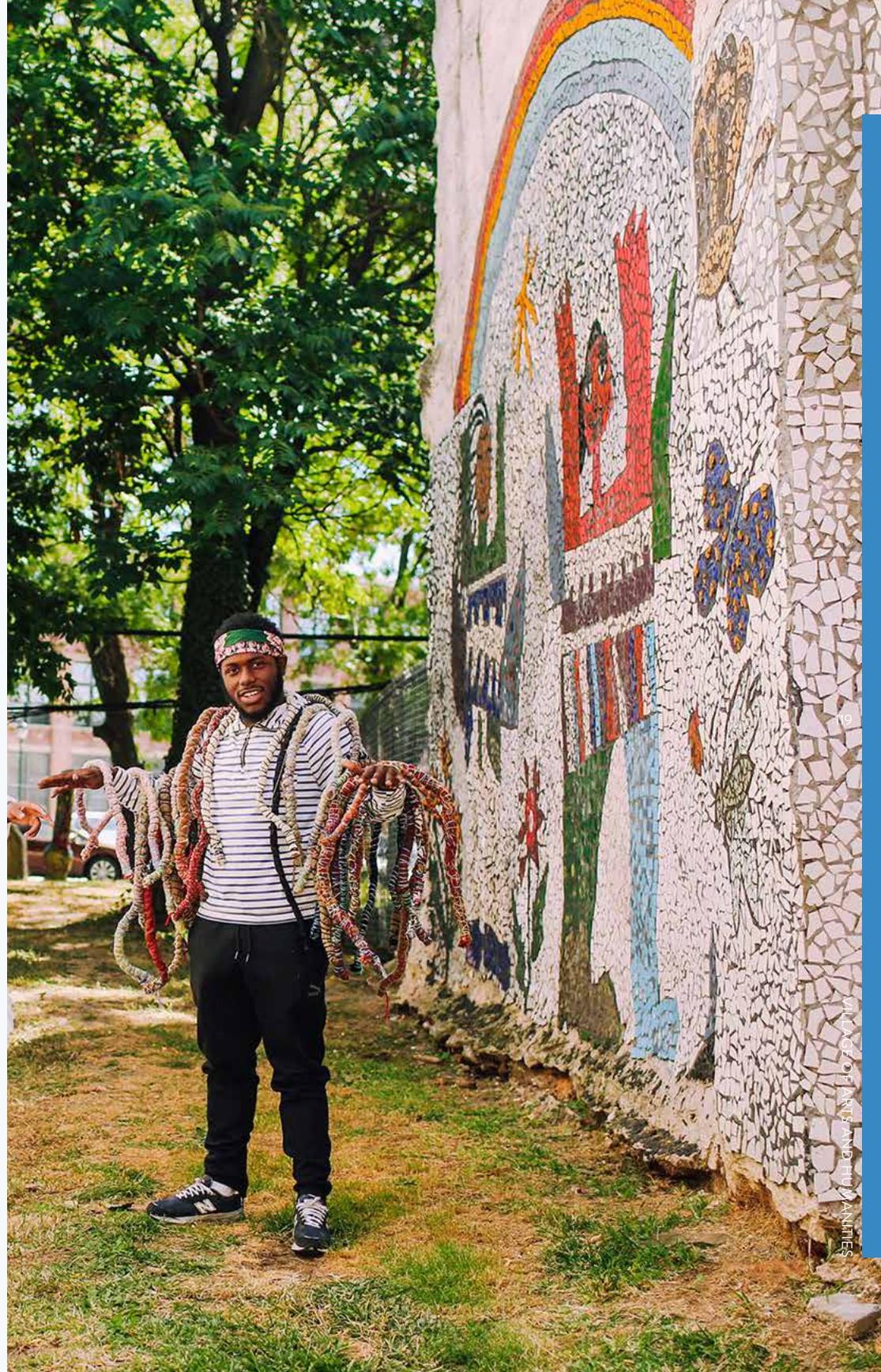
## Philadelphia

### Park Type: *Community heritage in the neighborhood*

Example of a project that knits together spaces in a community around a shared sense of heritage and history.

#### Key lessons to look for:

1. Art has the power to **bring people together**, even in neighborhoods that have experienced trauma and damage.
2. **Networks of parks and open spaces**, especially those created by people, can stitch together communities around a shared sense of purpose.
3. **Children's voices matter** and can deliver compelling expressions of place and pride.
4. **Beauty is a human right.**



## Geographic context

North Philadelphia, an imperfect description of neighborhoods directly north of Center City, can fall victim to being described in terms of its deficits: a history of redlining in its neighborhoods,<sup>39</sup> its “drug badlands,” unmaintained public housing, and entrenched poverty. But doing so would not be fair to the wealth of people, culture, and history that have called North Philadelphia home. As in many American cities, pride carries this community forward, and its fruits can be seen around the world, mostly through the deep attachment to arts and culture. Jazz artists John Coltrane, Jill Scott, and Lee Morgan; rappers Meek Mill and Lil Uzi Vert; spoken word artist Ursula Rucker; and comedian Kevin Hart were all born north of Liberty Bell.

A specific part of North Philly, an area just south of Lehigh Avenue at North 10th Street and Germantown Road, has a special history. A Philadelphia Housing Authority project lies immediately to the south. Through the center, a struggling commercial corridor runs north to south, at the other end of which lies some of the wealthiest neighborhoods in Pennsylvania. Open drug dealing and violence are not viewed as atypical on an average day.

In this setting was born a vision of the power of art to reclaim urban space.

## What were the goals?

To say that The Village of Arts and Humanities ever had any discrete “goals” misleads. A four-decade-long experiment in the power of art to transform places and people, The Village has grown organically, with the care and oversight of many people and leaders, under many different histories, and with a comfort in taking deliberate steps into uncertainty.

However, at its core, The Village of Arts and Humanities has attempted to stunt the challenging circumstances of this neighborhood—crime, poverty, drugs—by cocreating art in the public realm. The goal was to build alternative pathways for people, pathways that could

(Previous page): Olanre Tejuoso, *Material Memory*. 2016. Source: Breanne Furlong.

open doors to opportunity and prosperity. As many people now realize, where we grow up and live determines many of the outcomes of our lives. These influences, negative or positive, so embedded in places, have a way of influencing our life trajectories. The Village, in its earliest, most informal incarnation, wanted to create environments and places that would give people greater chances at their fullest potential.

Related to this people-based strategy, The Village also had an implicit goal of bringing power back to the people as it regarded who would create and maintain public space, and how they would do it. When it was created in the 1980s, the organization was surrounded by dwindling resources for urban America. As public support of parks, housing, and transit systems deteriorated, The Village sought to empower community members to take control of their environment in radical, sustainable, and beautiful ways. In North Philly, as in many other areas, disinvestment and vacancy had hollowed out the buildings and people of once-thriving neighborhoods. The Village wanted to turn these vacant lots into opportunities.

Leaders understood early on that art would help the community achieve these goals of empowering people and rebuilding the community.

## Arts-based strategy

Unlike other case studies, this project began with the arts and ended in parks, and as a result, needs some further history.

Arthur Hall, an African American dancer, choreographer, and teacher, came to found the *Ile Ife* Black Humanitarian Center on North 10th and Germantown Avenue, thanks to generous funding from President Johnson’s Model Cities Program. *Ile Ife* means, in Yoruban, “house of love”; the center was meant to serve as a welcome home for community youth to explore the role of dance and African culture. Hall looked for ways to continue the community activism and outreach



*Tree of Life*. Source: Village of Arts and Humanities.

through the arts that had been so successful, and expand it by adding new partners.

This opportunity came in an unexpected form, as the artist Lily Yeh, whom Hall had met at the University of the Arts in Philadelphia, expressed interest in collaborating. Yeh, who already had a reputation in painting, thought that the center could sponsor art around the building, in the vacant lots that were filled with rubble, chicken wire, and crack pipes. This would not only beautify the community, but also could build new sources of funding.

One of Yeh’s guiding principles has been that “beauty is a human right,” and that, to paraphrase, our humanity rests in our ability to work together to create beauty.

Starting in 1986, this team set about enhancing the neighborhood with murals, sculptures, and parks. Beginning as a summer program, they created, over many years, a series of in-

terconnected art parks, created primarily with children and residents. These parks included unique sculpture elements—benches and fences created with the detritus of the area as a fill—and colorful murals and paintings. Primary colors used throughout the spaces created consistency across the neighborhood. These activities, which grew in sophistication and scale, were done with little to no planning. The team learned as they went: making more stable sculptures and learning how to work with the community.

## What happened?

The outcomes of this work, over many decades, and involving many different initiatives, are plentiful. At the most essential level, members of this North Philadelphia neighborhood benefited from and thrived because of the Village’s work. Take, for example, in this retelling by the Wallace Foundation:

James “Big Man” Maxton, a onetime drug



peddler, was himself transformed by The Village, and is now its principal mosaic artist and operations director. Yeh's first ally from the neighborhood was a charismatic jack-of-all-trades named Joseph "Jo Jo" Williams. Jo Jo recruited Maxton as his disciple. Maxton was coaxed into the work over trashcan fires on summer nights when Williams spun out tales about how this little Chinese lady was going to transform eyesores into showcases and provide a decent living for everyone who pitched in.<sup>40</sup>

One of aspects of The Village's work involves learning and building from the expertise of the community, such as talented people like Jo-Jo. Instead of "teaching," The Village found ways to highlight everyone's expertise and interests.

Today, the parks in The Village form a continuous network of spaces and ideas across a broad swath of the neighborhood. Instead of being focused on one parcel or property, these art parks are distributed throughout the neighborhood and create a sense of unity. Some of the parks include Angel Park, inspired by images from Ethiopia that are believed to guard the community; Meditation Park, which reflects African architecture, Chinese gardens, and Islamic courtyards; and Kujenga Pamoja Park, Swahili for "Together We Build," which celebrates the act of building together in community.

More recently, the organization partnered with Mural Arts and others to address the long-disinvested commercial corridor Germantown Road. The team brought Dutch mural artists Jeroen Koolhaas and Dre Urhahn

(Haas&Hahn) to the corridor to paint a block-scaled abstract composition that covered entire buildings. The effort, bringing vibrancy and consistency to an area, was part of a larger economic development plan sponsored by Philadelphia's Department of Commerce and Department of Planning.

Structurally speaking, one of the most significant outcomes has been the long-term development of The Village of Arts and Humanities as an organization with regular programs and initiatives. One of the more promising uses of creative placemaking is the ability to foster and create organizations that can live on to provide long-lasting support. Today, The Village has \$1 million-plus budget and a staff of more than 15. Current programming includes environmental education, park preservation, artist residencies, and communi-

ty development.

This organizational capacity grew with and helped to support some challenging legal and land use issues in the area. The vacant land in The Village had unclear owners and tenants. As Yeh and the community started to take care of and improve these properties, the issues of site control became important to define. The organization smartly leveraged its contacts in real estate law to defend its use of these properties. Eventually, because The Village had maintained continuous stewardship of the site, the organization was able to transfer title of the property legally. Understanding and taking advantage of this skillset helped them ensure that The Village will remain a stable asset.



(Above): Jeroen Koolhaas & Dre Urhahn, *Philly Painting Project*. 2012. Source: Village of Arts and Humanities; (previous page): *Open Mic Night*. 2016. Source: Village of Arts and Humanities.

39. In the United States, redlining is the practice of denying services, either directly or through selectively raising prices, to residents of certain areas based on the racial or ethnic composition of those areas.

40. "Going Toward the Light: Philadelphia's Village of Arts and Humanities," *The Wallace Foundation, Knowledge Center*, last modified March 2003, // <http://www.wallace-foundation.org/knowledge-center/Pages/Philadelphia-Village-of-Arts-and-Humanities.aspx/>.

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# UNDERPASS PARK

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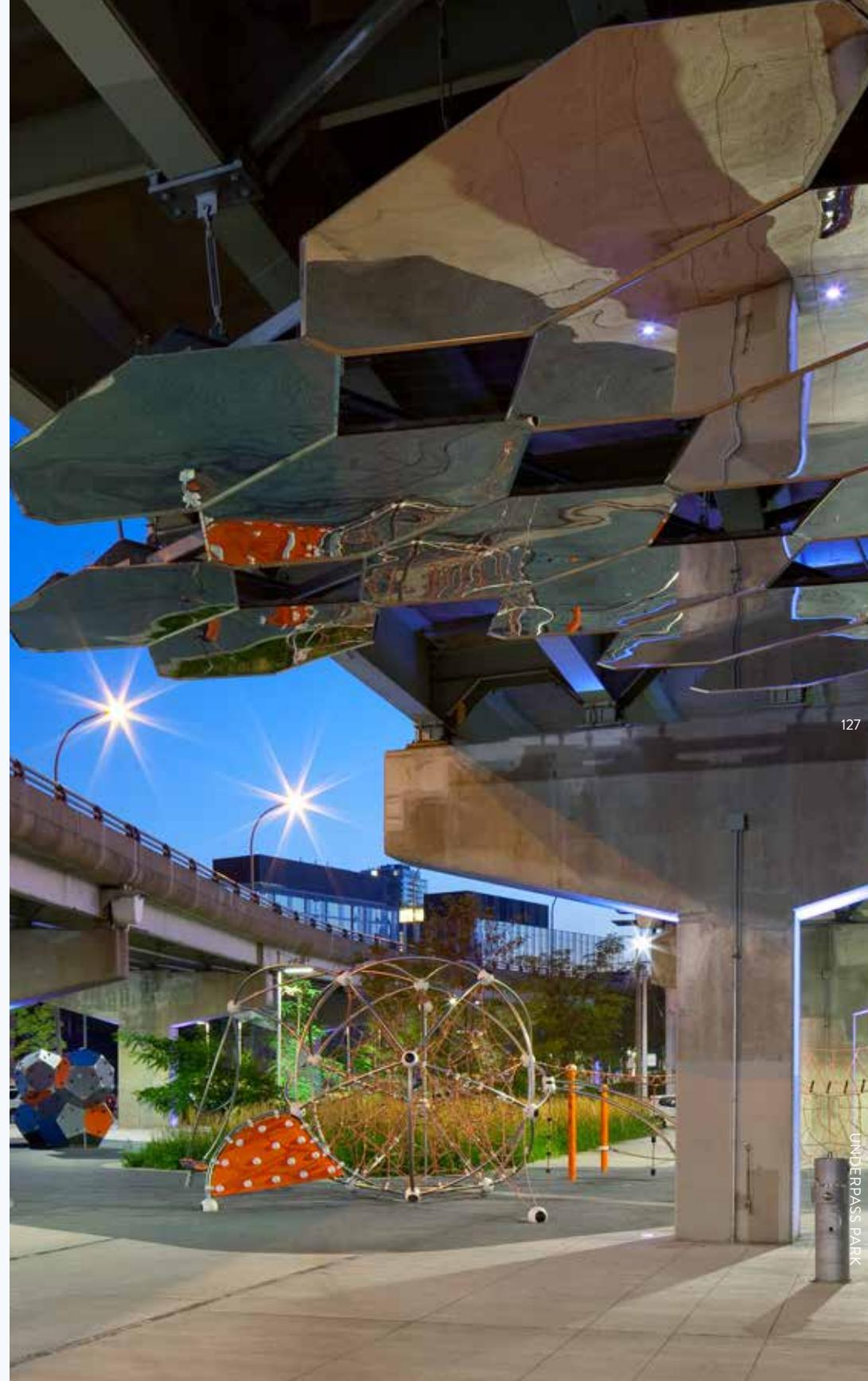
## Toronto

### Park Type: *Creative play spaces*

Identifying unique spaces and means to create opportunities for play, and putting those qualities in service of broader community development goals.

### Key lessons to look for:

1. Art can help to **reshape people's understanding of underused places**, or spaces perceived to be untoward and unsafe.
2. **Children's voices** can elevate and inform complex changes in cities and towns.
3. Art's inspirational power can help different organizations and entities to work together with newfound **collaboration and shared goals**.



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## Geographic context

Nearly 200 years ago, in the area in Ontario, Canada, now known as the West Don Lands - just to the east of downtown Toronto, where the Don River meets the city's Inner Harbor - town leaders hoped to build a large city park. Instead, the area was sold to private interests to subsidize the construction of York General Hospital. These interests used the land for distilling, manufacturing, and for meat processing, a trend that continued until the later part of the twentieth century.

This land, losing value as an industrial space, faced significant challenges for redevelopment. First, it was deeply polluted from the decades of contaminating uses. Secondly, it rested within the flood plain and faced significant dangers during storm events. These challenges have looked more and less attainable over the past three decades, depending on the state of the Toronto housing market. In the late 1980s when the city faced a shortage of subsidized housing, the area was rebranded as Ataratiri and included a new planned community of 14,000 housing units. This plan collapsed after failing to attract private capital, and, over the intervening years, the site was the focus of numerous plans and ideas.

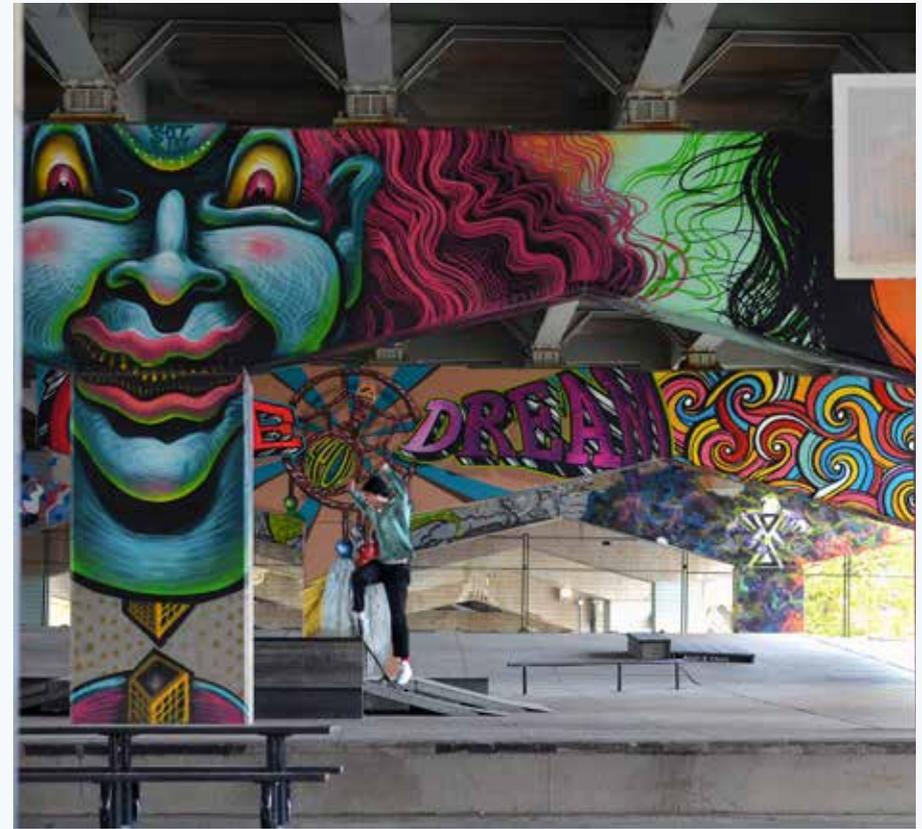
The transformative moment occurred when the Waterfront Toronto agency was formed to steer the development of the city's water-

front. This multilevel governmental agency had the resources and clout to push ideas into reality. The area further benefitted from a booming housing market in the early aughts, and even more so, from the selection of Toronto as the site of the 2015 Pan American Games. This area of the waterfront attracted enough capital to merit the necessary infrastructural improvements to mitigate environment challenges - contamination and flooding - and to create the parks and streets that would support a vital city neighborhood.

Additionally, the area faced complex and dynamic social circumstances. As was the case of many British colonial cities, the eastern half was predominantly industrial; many of its residents were working class and many faced economic hardships. The area also welcomed a great number of migrants from around the world, mostly focused in the Regent Park neighborhood, and included ethnicities from the Caribbean, China, and Southeast Asia. As changes to this part of the city unfolded rapidly, efforts to preserve this diversity and create structures of social support were important.

## What were the goals?

One of the discrete projects in this larger neighborhood and waterfront redevelopment involved the creation of a new park. Eastern Avenue, at its juncture with the Don Valley Parkway, sails over the neighborhood at Lower River Street in a massive highway viaduct.



Source: Nicola Betts. 2016, Digital Image.

This thoroughfare severs the existing and growing neighborhoods to the north from the emerging development site just to the south. Officials and residents alike were concerned that this necessary piece of infrastructure would split the neighborhood and make the development less successful. Or, worse, it could create hierarchies in this new space, cutting off residents from amenities and building unnecessary enclaves. Therefore, the primary goal was to enliven this dark, concrete space as a connector of places.

Secondly, every organization, department, and community group that worked on the project wanted it, tucked underneath a highway, to reflect the beautiful nuances of the neigh-

borhood, its people and its history. Instead of it feeling like an industrial afterthought, the community wanted this place to feel human and relatable.

## Arts-based strategy

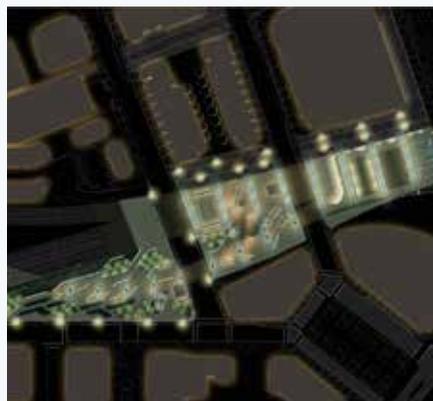
In this instance, the arts-based strategy involved a traditional and community-led public art plan. Because the "park" would never be a fully green space, the art itself had to in communicate that this was a place for people to gather, recreate and socialize. It had to make people feel welcome and make the environment dynamic.

This process was driven by a deep level of community engagement, steered through the

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UNDERPASS PARK



(Left): Before image of Underpass Park site. 2010. Source: PFS Studio; (Right): Site lighting plan. 2010. Source: PFS Studio; (previous page): Paul Raff, *Mirage*. 2016. Source: Tom Arban, courtesy of PFS Studio.

UNDERPASS PARK

leadership of the Corktown Residents and Business Association, as well as other groups such as the Friends of the Pan Am Path. This group steered the design team toward solutions that were focused on people, life, culture, and programming. A public art process was supported by the local arts commission and included broad community buy-in.

The resulting artworks serve to add character to the formerly infrastructural space and to convey the sense of identity of the people in the surrounding neighborhoods. A signature piece is *Mirage*, by Paul Raff Studio, a suspended cluster of reflective panels that magnify daytime sunlight and animate the nighttime LED lighting under the bridge structure. The work helps to mask the concrete undercarriage of the highway and suggests movement throughout the space.

A sanctioned graffiti event, led by StreetARToronto, a collective of artists focused on using public space for social and economic benefits, painted murals on the concrete columns that support the highway. A later section of this graffiti was completed by the artists Troy Lovegates, aka "Other," and Labrona in 2016. It includes one individual, observed and photographed in the neighborhood, painted on each column, as if holding up the highway alone. These diverse caricatures communicate that it's the people that make a city, that hold it up, and that make it a place.

### What happened?

Underpass Park has been a success in every way. It has received numerous awards for its thoughtful and restrained design. Although these are important, most of the people involved with the project would cite its level of use by the community as the most cherished outcome of the park project. Skateboarders gleefully roll on custom-built ledges, basketball players have their own courts, and innovative kids' play equipment adds design and flare. As the first Canadian park under a highway underpass, Underpass Park has spurred other cities to look at underused spaces for sites to create active new public spaces that can serve the community.

The depth of the community engagement and the public art process also created secondary, unexpected outcomes in the city. The project, couched within much larger initiatives along the waterfront and in and around downtown, was a jewel to the city, thanks in large part to the culture of the place. Many city, province, and federal government agencies and officials worked together for the first time and in efficient ways, thanks to this common goal. Art helped to create cultural bridges not only among residents of West Don and Regents Park, but also among these officials, designers, and politicians.



(Clockwise): Children's Playground. Source: Tom Arban, courtesy of PFS Studio; Basketball and murals. Source: Nicola Betts; StreetARToronto, Murals. Source: Tom Arban, courtesy of PFS Studio; Hopscotch: Tom Arban, courtesy of PFS Studio.

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# THE 606 PARK AND TRAIL

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## Chicago

### **Park Type:** *Infrastructure reimagined*

Taking advantage of underutilized public infrastructure and using culture to tell the stories of these possibilities.

### **Key lessons to look for:**

1. Cultural engagement can affirm genuine and **meaningful engagement techniques** to ensure that a park is “for the people, by the people.”
2. Maintaining community involvement throughout a process can build **longer-term stewardship** and sense of belonging.
3. The arts can create the **sense of place** as much as physical improvement.



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The 606. 2016. Source: Adam Alexander, courtesy of The Trust for Public Land.

## Geographic context

The story of The 606 begins in the aftermath of the *Great Chicago Fire of 1871*, which burned through the city for two days, killing 300 people and leaving 100,000 others homeless. In the fire's aftermath, Chicago was faced with rebuilding almost four square miles of the city, and the City Council permitted the Chicago & Pacific Railroad to build the Bloomingdale Line on the near northwest side on an existing street right-of-way. Though many residents protested the rail line, some welcomed the rapid growth in the surrounding communities.<sup>41</sup> However, its dangerous grade-level crossings killed numerous pedestrians each year, and in response to public outcry, the City Council required tracks citywide to be elevated, a process completed on the Bloomingdale Line in 1915.

Elevating the rail line required significant infrastructure changes, including erecting embankment walls—akin to an enormous concrete bathtub seven feet thick at the bottom—that created a physical barrier between four neighborhoods that were once connect-

ed: Bucktown, Wicker Park, Humboldt Park and Logan Square. For years, the railroads served Chicago's industrial and manufacturing interests, but over time the need for intra-urban rail transport declined. By 2001, most freight traffic on the line was halted, and the line was largely abandoned. During this time, while trees rooted, flowers bloomed, and animals returned, community members began to explore the space. Those who ventured up unofficially in the early 2000s created an impromptu nature trail and found a unique elevated natural habitat with unmatched views of the city.

In the late 1990s, the Bloomingdale Line was included in the city's bike plan. A few years later in 2003, the city began to explore options for creating new parks and open space on the northwest side of the city where such amenities were severely lacking. At around the same time, a group of community members formed an advocacy group: Friends of the Bloomingdale Trail (FBT). Discussions about the redevelopment of the Bloomingdale Line to a park and trail system officially began, and



The 606. 2016. Source: Adam Alexander, courtesy of The Trust for Public Land.

a year later, the 2004 Logan Square Open Space Plan called for an ambitious reuse of the former industrial rail corridor. In 2011, the city and the Chicago Park District asked The Trust for Public Land to serve as the lead private partner on the project and focus on project coordination, community engagement, and fundraising. In the same year, The Trust for Public Land held several public meetings including a three-day charrette, where over 250 community members and local stakeholders shared their vision and objectives for the project.

## What were the goals?

In addition to a desire for more park space, the community articulated a clear set of objectives that, if accomplished, would position the trail as a community connector, physically reuniting four neighborhoods (Logan Square, Humboldt Park, Wicker Park and Bucktown) that had been severed nearly a century earlier when the railroad tracks were elevated. Along with FBT, community members imagined a beautiful, living work of art in the public realm that would physically and socially unite

neighbors, schools, and local and citywide organizations. The 606 project also sought to connect residents to their local environment, build a foundation for long-term stewardship, and develop civic leaders who would advance broader community environmental goals.

In March of 2012, project managers presented a framework plan that captured community aspirations about the space. However, groundbreaking for the future park would not occur until three years later, in June of 2015. During the planning and construction phases, a need emerged to bridge the gap between the active community engagement phase and the opening of the park. Arts and cultural programming became opportunities to connect people to this physical space and to develop a sense of ownership, well before the park even opened.

## Arts-based strategy

The 606 defines its arts initiatives through several categories: programming and partnerships, embedded artworks and event facilities, and temporary installations. A key early decision was to include a lead artist as a member of

the design team. The result was that arts ideas and concepts are integrated with the design of The 606 and were not afterthoughts. In addition to the work of lead artist Frances Whitehead -- a broad and creative thinker who could see the project in a larger external context -- many other artists, working in a variety of scales and disciplines, have been involved.

Early in the design phase of The 606, engagement efforts led by The Trust for Public Land were focused on issues of access, safety, landscape, and other park features. However, when the designs were completed and the trail infrastructure was under construction, project coordinators pivoted from participatory design to other kinds of engagement that sought to highlight the cultural assets of the community. Projects included youth and multigenerational arts and learning; stewardship activities that connect nature and culture; residencies and internships; and connections to schools, cultural institutions, and other partners.

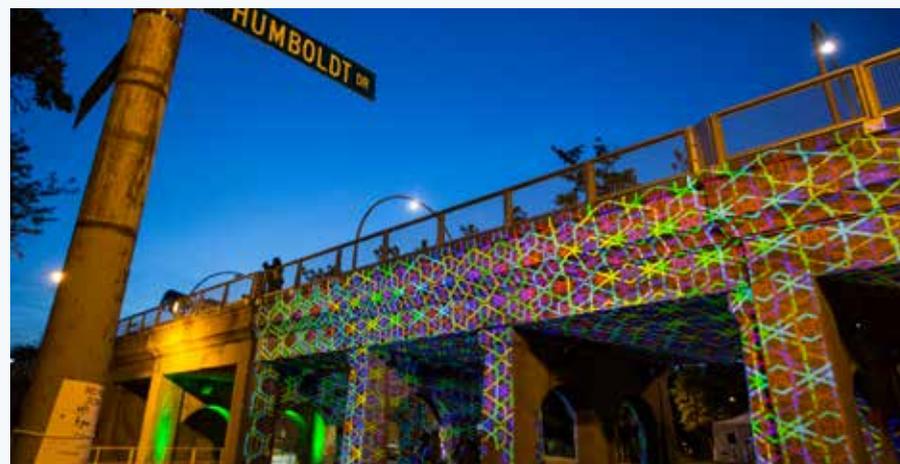
136 Programs began well before the trail opened, and were a conversation starter for community members that had limited or no interaction with the project during the design phase. FBT and The Trust for Public Land spearheaded a photography project that invited local youth to document the trail in its “before” condition; their work was displayed in a local gallery alongside a professional photographer who had also been documenting the haunting beauty of the abandoned railroad. The Trust for Public Land launched its “Trail Mix” event series, activities with a broad range of formats: a bridge-building workshop with city engineers; a culinary history of The 606 neighborhoods; a bicycle rodeo, co-hosted by West Town Bikes (a local non-profit) and the Chicago Police Department. With ongoing concerns about large projects interrupting communities and potential gentrification, the arts and programming responded to the community’s vision and kept them involved and empowered.

During the preliminary design phase of The 606 while these programs were underway,

engineers discovered lead paint on the old embankment walls. This meant that dozens of existing murals that had been painted over the years, mostly without permission, would have to be removed. The literal erasure of community culture concerned many local residents. The Trust for Public Land hired a photographer from the community to document the existing artworks, then partnered with the Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events and Kuumba Lynx, a local arts organization, to invite local graffiti artists to curate a six-block section of the wall. Over 60 artists, all paid for their work, created what is now known as *The Graffiti Garden*, a distinctive feature of The 606.

As opening day approached there was great excitement, but also mounting concern that the shiny new park was “not for the community.” Project coordinators understood that it was essential that the opening day celebration reflect the spirit of the community that had long advocated for the park and trail. To that end, they invited six local arts organizations to serve as conveners for a series of participatory processions that would culminate in a celebratory block party. Prior to opening day, each of the conveners held a series of art-making workshops that invited local residents to be part of the spectacle of the opening. For example, Segundo Ruiz Belvis Cultural Center (SRBCC) hosted a residency with a well-known Puerto Rican *comparsa* artist who led mask-making and *plena* workshops. (*Comparsas* are large-scale street processions common in Puerto Rico and *plena* is the accompanying music.)

In the end, opening day featured the work of over 300 paid local artists and musicians, 50 community groups, and 50,000 participants and spectators. By serving as “executive producers” but turning over the creative direction and authority to other organizations with deep community roots, The Trust for Public Land established a programmatic approach that highlights local cultural assets and helps them to thrive.



(Above): The 606, 2016. Source: Adam Alexander and Joshua Lott, courtesy of The Trust for Public Land.

In addition to large and small scale cultural celebrations, embedded artworks on The 606 invite continued community participation and engagement as citizen scientists. For instance, one of the trail's key features is a climate-monitoring artwork and landscape intervention, known as *Environmental Sentinel*. Designed by Frances Whitehead, this artwork consists of 453 native flowering trees, *amelanchier x grandiflora* (autumn brilliance serviceberry), planted along the 2.7 mile length of the trail. These temperature-sensitive plants serve as bio-indicators of microclimate change along the site, which is located in close proximity to Lake Michigan, and has a cooling effect on air temperature. As described by the artist, the project is “modeled after the Japanese Cherry Blossom Festival whose transient blooming has attracted audiences for centuries,” adding that “this phenologic spectacle will become a living data visualization in time and space, allowing scientists, artists, and citizens of all ages to observe and study Chicago’s relationship to Lake Michigan over the next century.”<sup>42</sup>

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## What happened?

The 606 is first and foremost a recreational facility organized around a path where runners, bicyclists, and walkers can travel without the interruption of motor vehicles. It includes vegetation and aesthetic elements that are intended to attract and engage residents and visitors. More than 50,000 people visited on opening day in 2015, and The 606 has been regularly and heavily visited since.

Artists have been involved throughout the development of this iconic Chicago project,

and the result set a new standard for the art of placemaking. The continued involvement of artists will ensure the arts are incorporated into The 606 in ways that are beautiful, innovative, and seamless – creating a living work of art that is uniquely Chicago.

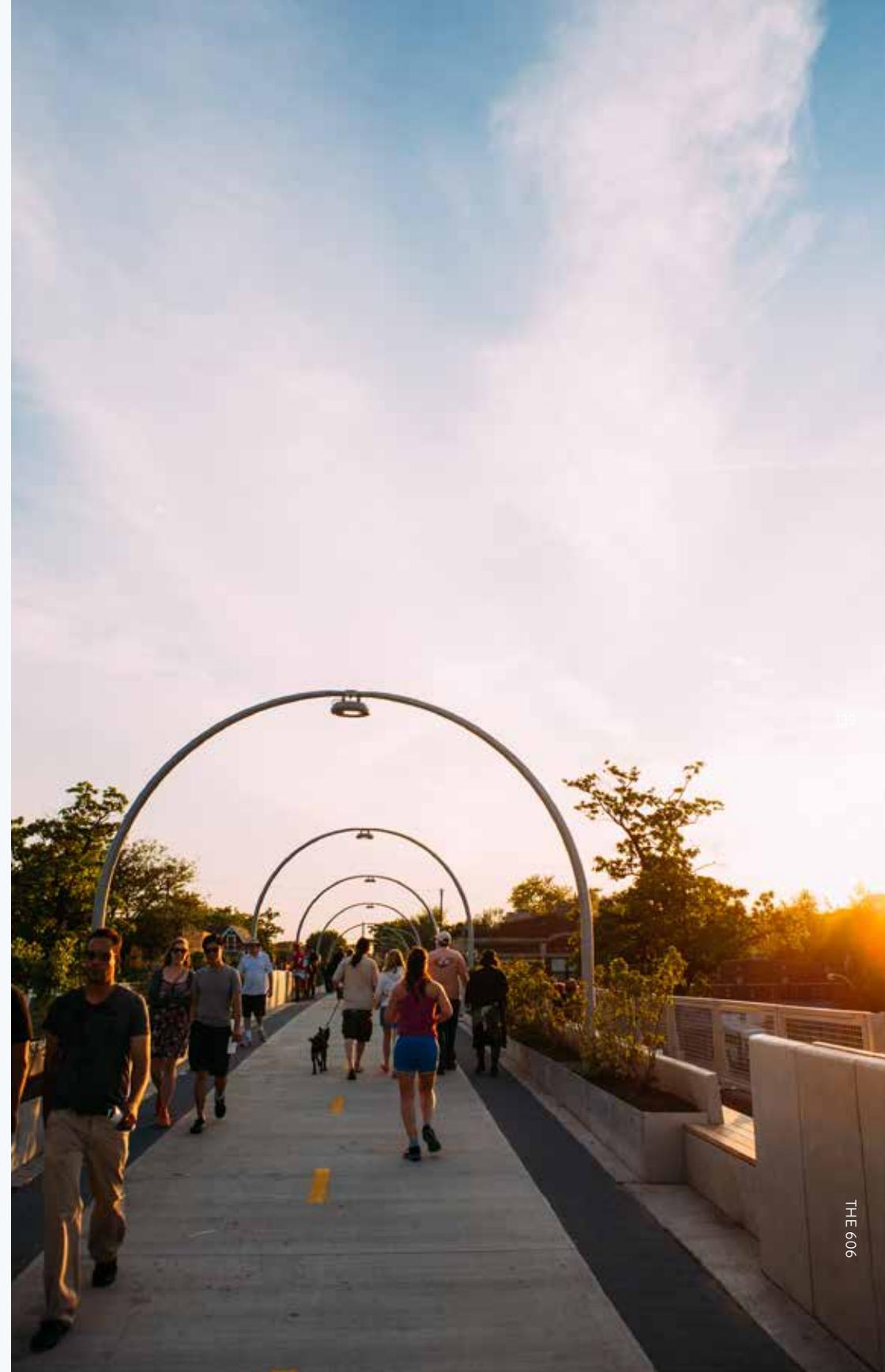
Participating in this project, residents are encouraged to see their neighborhood in new ways – and to become aware and build support for parks and trails projects. This type of collaborative creation of place ensures that The 606 is a project and space for the people, by the people. Staff working on this project found that funders are willing to support these types of community engagement efforts, and that there is opportunity to incorporate art and culture into community engagement processes and to implement outreach efforts in a way that is deep and meaningful to the local community.

Community engagement – in the form of programming, art, or lecture series – beyond only asking people about their design preferences, has been invaluable to The 606 project. Building these activities into the park development process and budget is essential for this type of engagement. Leaving room for experimentation, surprise, and unexpected outcomes can also benefit both those managing and participating in park projects. Ultimately, these activities have also led to a more active living space, and a promise of a sustained and beloved place.

41. Terence Banich, “The Bloomingdale Line,” *Forgotten Chicago*, accessed June 12, 2017, <http://forgottenchicago.com/features/the-bloomingdale-line/>.

42. Frances Whitehead, “Environmental Sentinel: A Climate Observation Artwork + Related Recent Works,” *Art Et Al Studio*.

(Opposite page): The 606. 2016. Source: Joshua Lott, courtesy of The Trust for Public Land.



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# THE FARGO PROJECT - WORLD GARDEN COMMONS

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## Fargo, North Dakota

### Park Type: *Water Stories*

Reconnecting people to water or rethinking how water is managed in the community as a cultural asset.

#### Key lessons to look for:

1. **Artists can be environmental leaders** and help steer important conversations that might normally be reserved for scientists or engineers.
2. Key project leaders **understood the time and constraints**, particularly of each organization and partner, to be flexible with timing and progress.
3. **Partner development happened organically** over several years, as opposed to forcing relationships, giving each member a more fully vested sense of involvement.



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Party in the Park. 2016. Source: The Fargo Project.

## Geographic context

Between April and October in the late 19th century, trains loaded with goods from Saint Paul, Minnesota would offload onto steamboats on the Red River, which ran through Fargo, North Dakota. This trade made the city an important entrepôt and gateway to western commerce.<sup>43</sup> Today, Fargo, a city of more than 120,000 and the largest in the state, continues to thrive in many ways, with a low employment rate, low crime and quality housing stock.

The city resides in the Red River Valley, formed by the withdrawal of the glacial Lake Agassiz, which has some of the most fertile and productive farmland in the country. As the river flows north, melting snowpack and ice creates ice dams, causing water to breach the banks. Because Fargo's landscape is mostly flat, overland flooding has become a significant concern for the city and the region. Serious floods in the 1990s elevated the awareness of this threat and spurred substantial investment in water management infrastructure, including "concrete channels, drainage pipes, pumps, and containment basins, or 'ponds.'" Subsequent severe weather in the 2000s, while damaging, was strikingly less impactful than it could have been before these investments.

(Previous page): Community Garden. 2016. Source: The Fargo Project.

## What were the goals?

This stormwater infrastructure, while effective, had unintended consequences for the community. Many of the pipes and ditches separated neighborhoods and created discontinuity between places. The oldest, and in many occasions largest basins are in low to moderate-income neighborhoods, including areas where Fargo's Native American and New American population lives (refugees and immigrants from twenty different nations). These important assets worked very well in one way, but not in others, serving to devalue some of the landscape in and around these communities. Retention basins, in their normative state, are not the most attractive features of cities.

Leaders in city government and the community began to recognize that this infrastructure had deleterious effects on the quality of many residents' lives. It became apparent that any solution to make these spaces more welcoming and more useful would have to rely on creativity and ingenuity and not necessarily more engineering.

In 2009, the Red River flooded again, further cresting the awareness for solutions to a town where water affects more and more of everyday life.

## Arts-based strategy

The strategies and solutions used to reach these goals were unique in their grassroots and artist-led perspective. This was not an expert-driven project. It attempted, in at times radical ways, to give voice to as many people as possible.

The origin story of the Fargo Project most frequently starts with visits from the environmental artist Jackie Brookner, who had an interest in both community-based art and stormwater management. Brookner had connected with a Fargo resident and advocate in New York, where they both shared excitement about the opportunities in North Dakota. After a series of exploratory conversations among city officials, Fargo, through planning administrator Nicole Crutchfield, decided to bring Brookner to the town for a visit with local leaders and stakeholders, including the Plains Art Museum, North Dakota State University, and the Spirit Room (a local community center). Fargo had a history of bringing outside experts to the city and was familiar with this kind of outreach. Brookner and her Fargo-based partners quickly found parallel

interests and perspectives. While the environmental challenges of the area were important, conversations quickly tracked to questions about community, about outsiders versus belonging, and about celebrating together as a community. These questions became important as they toured water management sites.

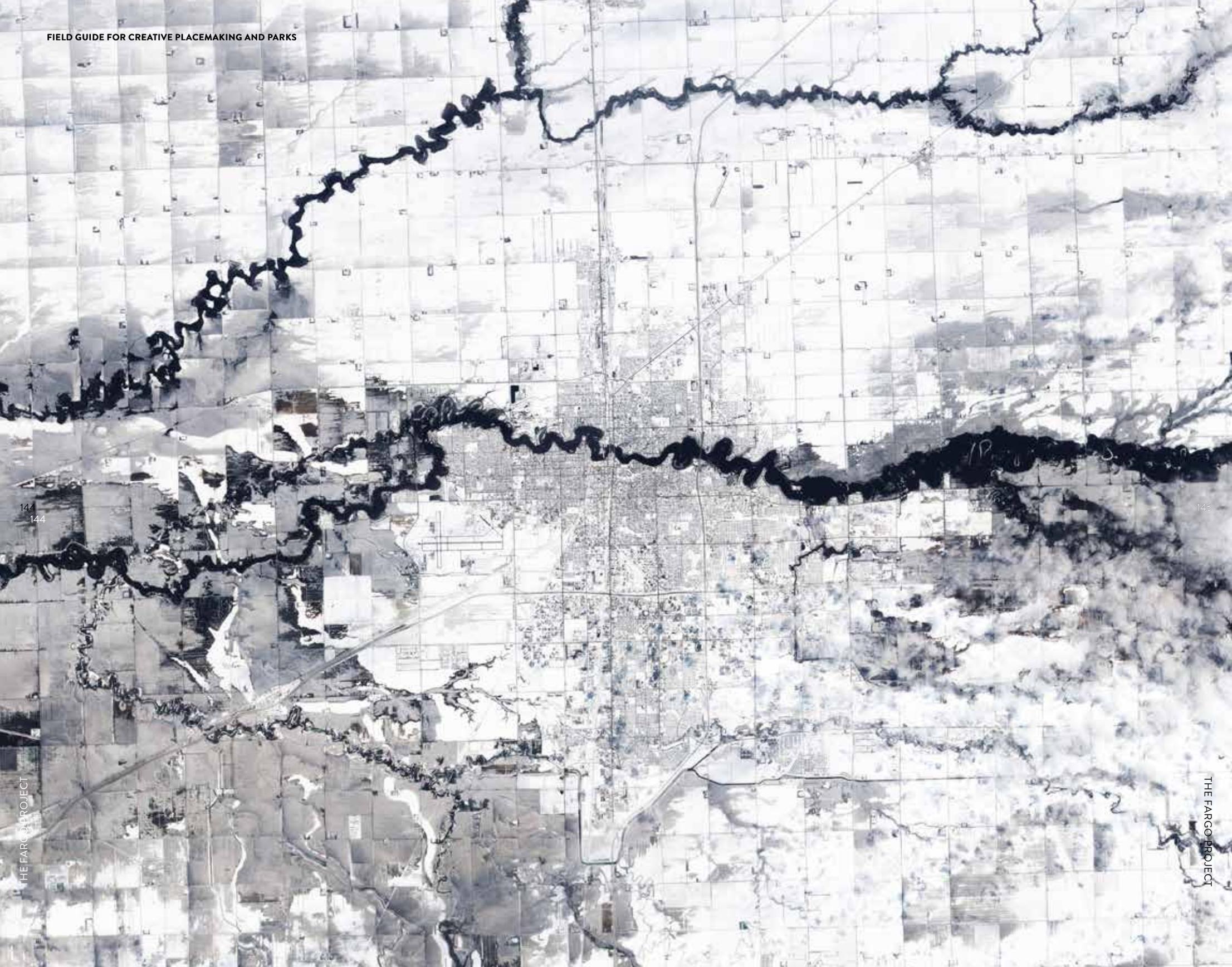
After the visit, Brookner talked about a potential vision for a project in a stormwater basin:

*"A central gathering place ... will create a sense of place and convey the specific identity and individuality of the Red River and Fargo (looking both back and forward in time), that will facilitate encounters with people and the landscape, and that will also function ecologically to restore habitat and help keep urban stormwater pollution out of the river."<sup>44</sup>*

The team discussed an intervention at one of the retention basin sites as a first step. Based on her initial and future visits, they narrowed it down to five potential sites and identified an ideal site based on the criteria of access, visibility, and disturbance risks, as well as the preference for a neighborhood that did not already have a place to gather. The site chosen



Party in the Park. 2016. Source: The Fargo Project.



was Rabanus Park, which was dominated by a large retention basin. The neighborhood around the park included many apartment complexes and big-box retail establishments.

What could be done to make this large site with no trees and very little, an active community space that reflected the diversity of the community?

The artist could meet with local engineers and bureaucrats on their terms. After some initial hesitation about how to speak with an artist as part of an engineering process, members of the group could become comfortable with each other and their goals. Brookner made sure to respect and understand the engineering challenges and needs, and didn't start from a place of questioning. Radically open listening helped not only to build understanding, but



(Above and below): *Listening Garden*. 2016. Source: The Fargo Project and Amu Productions.

Brookner, instead of leading with her own idea, led with a process of deep engagement. Her initial task was to educate people that stormwater is social and cultural – a true human concern, and not merely something for an “engineer to solve.”<sup>45</sup> She engaged a diverse set of people across the neighborhood, throughout city agencies, and in community partners, and she did so for the beauty of that engagement and not merely to gather feedback about an existing solution. Ideally, the people would be equal authors of whatever happened in Rabanus Park.

also to broker trust between the partners.

The team instituted methods to engage people and groups in deep ways. A steering committee was established from the various community partners. This committee had subcommittee interest groups that could quickly tackle important issues and tasks. Additionally, many of the community groups in the area hadn't been part of community design processes such as these. The group took extra measures to ensure that everyone who might access the site in the future had contact with Brookner, Crutchfield, or other project leaders. This

involved setting up tables outside, canvassing, and other very grassroots coalition-building methods.

With the engagement of city engineers, neighbors, and local organizations showing strong signs of success, the group planned for a touchstone event, “Imagining Together WeDesign,” a daylong workshop to imagine the renovation of the retention basin in Rabanus Park into a World Garden Commons. The day included more than 200 people from

As part of the planning for the WeDesign process, the team instituted a “train the trainer” approach to the arts by putting out a call for local artists to be involved in the park process to be trained by Brookner, whose expertise could continue to influence the site and do so through local perspectives. These artists could embody their own agendas and practices and gain deeper understandings of ecological processes and working with diverse stakeholders.

The WeDesign event showcased a variety of backgrounds and plenty of cultural activities, such as a Native American drum circle and intertribal dance, accompanied by fry bread tacos. The train the trainer approach ensured that these activities were locally-based and that they were sustainable over a long period of time.

The event helped to produce a vision to create a public space reflective of the worldly and rich cultural histories in Fargo and that could become a true asset to the community. The WeDesign event marked the beginning of a more sustained design and implementation effort. The group found ways to continually engage the community after the charrette and to build the project's momentum.

The arts-based strategy has been apparent in two ways: first, as an artist-led process to think differently about urban spaces and to engage diverse communities and second, by using the arts as a way to make infrastructure more human and accessible.

## What happened?

The Fargo Project is an ongoing process, and the final vision for the project will unfold over the next several years. Nonetheless, there was an important conceptual shift made by including artists in what the “project” actually was. Instead of seeing a finished public space as the only important outcome, the project team realized that the process of engagement, design, and stewardship was a project unto itself, with its own value and benefits.

The World Garden Commons was the first realization of an eventual, more comprehensive master plan. It included new public spaces, artist installations, gardens, and public pathways. It helped to seed ideas about how the basin could be used by the community.

A great example of these cultural activities include the sculptor Dwight Mickelson's *Listening Garden*, a sculpture that includes two listening spaces, one, a small alcove where people can listen to sounds of the meadow - frogs, crickets and birds - and another larger space that can host concerts, theater, and other events.

This project also highlighted the importance for collaborative project management within the city. For example, the city's maintenance staff instituted a no-mow policy for the site, to understand the plant diversity on the site. The city realized that this practice had value and saved money, and has since expanded its use. The city restructured some of its internal management to ensure that projects such as this would have appropriate capacity and oversight. The excitement and potential of The World Garden Commons led them to institute new exploratory processes within everyday practices and projects that could take advantage of these opportunities.

43. “Fargo, North Dakota: Its History and Image, Steamboats, 1859-1871.” *North Dakota State University Archives*, accessed June 12, 2017, <https://library.ndsu.edu/fargo-history/?q=content/steamboats-1859-1871>.

44 & 45. Rachel Asleson, Anna Cunningham, and Mriil Ingram, “Integrating Artists and City Planning: The Fargo Project Lessons Learned,” City of Fargo.

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# BUFFALO BAYOU

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## Houston

### Park Type: *Urban wilderness*

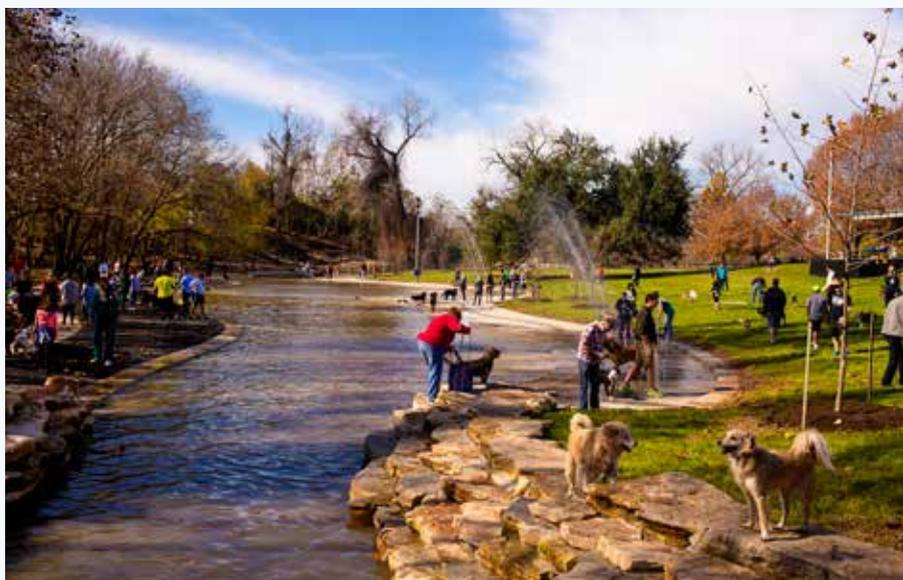
Creating unexpected moments of wilderness and relieve in urban environments.

### Key lessons to look for:

1. **Environmentally-specific arts** efforts can create spaces that feel of the place and region.
2. Arts can help to connect people to nature and **spark people's imaginations** about their local environments.
3. Including art in substantial regional environmental projects can sustain the **"big idea"** inherent in such projects over time and geography.



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SWA Group, *Buffalo Bayou Park*. Source: Katya Horner, courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership.

## Geographic context

Houston is the most populous city in one of the fastest-growing, racially and ethnically diverse metropolitan areas in the nation. With increased development, loss of natural areas such as wetlands can occur.<sup>46</sup> This is a concern in places where development has occurred without a plan, as it had in Houston.<sup>47</sup> With recent natural disasters, including Hurricane Ike and a multiyear drought, protection and stewardship of Houston's ecosystems is essential.

When these natural areas are lost, so too are the important benefits that the close-to-home connection to nature provides. Exposure to the natural environment, coupled with effective design can make urban parks and parkways an invaluable resource. Furthermore, influxes of new populations need opportunities to explore and connect to local and unique environments, as well as to one another. The area's more than 2.2 million people, over 145 different languages spoken, and a relatively young population provides a significant opportunity – and a need – to engage residents in creative and innovative ways.

(Previous page): SWA Group, *Buffalo Bayou Park*. Source: Jonnu Singleton, courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership.

Texas is famous for its bayous, or systems of extremely slow-moving streams, rivers, or marshy areas. Buffalo Bayou, which starts near Katy, Texas, and flows approximately 53 miles east to Galveston Bay and the Gulf of Mexico, greatly influenced how Houston evolved since its founding in 1836, and remains one of Houston's most significant natural resources.

Buffalo Bayou Partnership (BBP), a non-profit organization, was founded in 1986 with a focus on revitalizing and transforming a 10-mile stretch of the Buffalo Bayou. BBP collaborated with the City of Houston, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department, and the Harris County Flood Control District to develop and operate the 160-acre Buffalo Bayou Park, which includes recreational facilities, programming and events, and various permanent and temporary art installations.

## What were the goals?

Buffalo Bayou was for a long time an infrastructural space, not construed as an “environment” or as something natural. It had long been designed as something to contain and



Donald Lipski, *Down Periscope*. 2017. Source: Nash Baker, courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership.

not as something that could offer area residents joy or pleasure. The goal of the project was to educate Houstonians, a community with radically changing demographics, that the Bayou was part of their cultural landscape.<sup>48</sup>

For the longest time, Buffalo Bayou was green in every sense of the word. It had plentiful trees and flora; it had an ever-changing waterway; and it had wildlife and fauna. But for area residents, to find “nature” they had to leave Houston, and enter the beautiful, arid landscapes of Texas, or cross the causeway and dangle their toes into the Gulf of Mexico.

The Buffalo Bayou Park, a \$58 million project, was an effort to create a forward-thinking urban park with access to nature for all. Thanks to the generous support of foundations (including a \$30 million catalytic gift from the Kinder Foundation for Buffalo Bayou Park), corporations, individuals, and government agencies, BBP has raised and leveraged more than \$150 million for the redevelopment of the bayou overall.

But this effort was not just focused on provid-

ing a 21st century park, it was also focused on building a community around that park.<sup>49</sup>

## Arts-based strategy

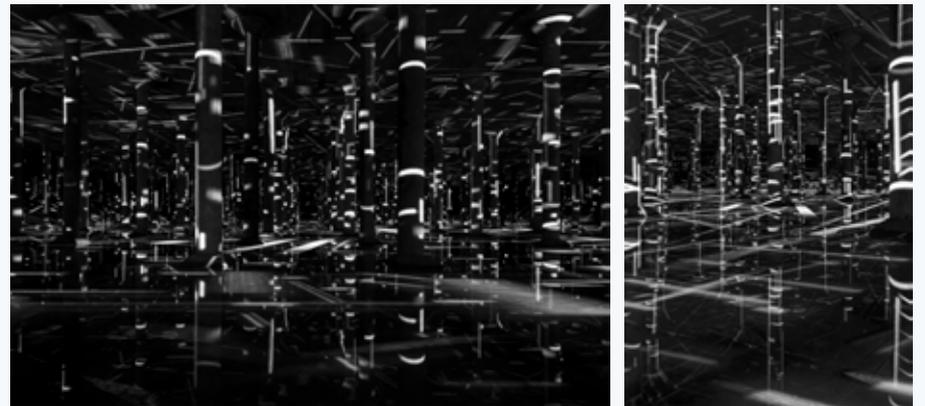
From the beginning, park leaders knew that a strong arts-based strategy would help to bring people to the new park and to educate them about the environmental challenges that created the bayou in the first place. These cultural expressions could be both wonderful examples of south Texan culture, but also serve to give people an understanding of natural systems in urban contexts.

The public art within Buffalo Bayou Park is intended to complement the environment of the park; in addition, the art celebrates life in Houston. Activities and arts along Buffalo Bayou and Buffalo Bayou Park have been pursued to activate the natural spaces, to stitch the built and natural worlds together, and to anchor people to place, and to one another. Overall, the goal is to lead the development of the city through parks and culture.

There are numerous thoughtful, recognizable pieces of public art along Buffalo Bayou. These



(Top): Anthony Thompson Shumate, *Monumental Moments*. 2017. Source: Jonnu Singleton, courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership; (Bottom): Stephen Korns, *Houston Oracle in Two Parts*. 2016. Source: Nash Baker.



(Top): SWA Group, *Buffalo Bayou Cistern*. Source: Maribel Amador, courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership; (Middle and bottom): Magdalena Fernández, *Rain*. 2017. Source: Peter Molick, courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership.

pieces reflect the local conditions – aspects of the city’s history and people, natural cycles and elements, activities that take place in the parks, and emotions elicited by the space.

Stephen Kornis installed a multisensory video, audio, and sculpture work, just one block from Buffalo Bayou. As described by Next City, “Whereas Kornis’ work typically deals with perception of and access to nature, this installation, titled ‘The Houston Oracle in Two Parts,’ takes a kaleidoscopic view of Houston history, a fractured and mysterious archive Kornis hopes will also speak to the future.” According to the artist, these stories and visuals urge visitors to ask questions about what the city is or can be, what histories are represented, and who has access to spaces and their legacies.

This project was an outgrowth of an innovative lighting project, designed by Kornis and L’Observatoire, an international lighting firm, that enlivens bridges, trails, and the waterway with a blue-to-white color scheme that changes in tandem with the phases of the moon.

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Entryways and access points to Buffalo Bayou also integrate large-scale public art. Artist John Runnels’ 12 elegant, 20-foot stainless steel canoe sculptures were installed between 2006 and 2014. These reflect the recreational opportunities that the local waterways provide, but also pay homage to an important resource – Buffalo Bayou – that the artist has called Houston’s “birth canal.”

Another example is the “Monumental Moments” project created and installed by artist Anthony Thompson Shumate. This installation involves a series of five human-scale word sculptures; the words *Explore*, *Endure*, *Pause*, *Reflect*, *Listen*, *Emerge*, and *Observe* are placed intentionally around the pedestrian pathways to elicit surprise and unexpected moments as visitors explore the park.

A recent piece involves improvements made to the Cistern, a former 87,500 square foot

underground water reservoir. With funding from The Brown Foundation, BBP transformed the Cistern into a magnificent public space. As part of this, Donald Lipski created a permanent artwork, *Down Periscope*, that allows users to peer into the depths of the Cistern from the lawn above. In addition to history tours, the Cistern periodically houses art installations.

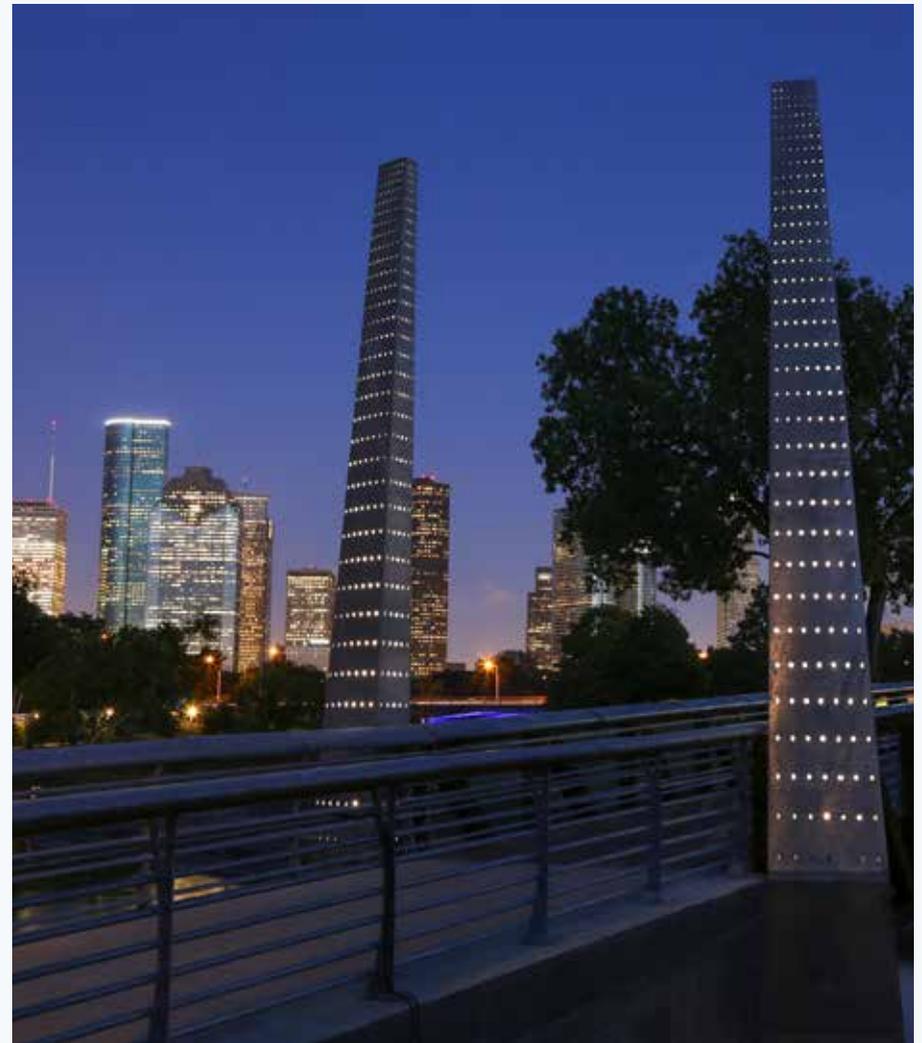
### What happened?

As a means of restoring a neglected waterway, the implementation of murals, sculptures, and other works from local artists has created a welcome and inviting space for residents. Since the opening of the Buffalo Bayou Park, the community has been able to engage with the public land that was once abandoned and forgotten.

The arts has helped to tell the story of what it means to be a Houstonian, and how the natural and urban landscapes come together to create a sense of place. The Cistern, once an invisible piece of infrastructure, has become one of the most popular spaces in the park, and in Houston. Since opening in May 2016, over 50,000 visitors have experienced the space.

To encourage exploration and promotion of these elements, the Houston Parks and Recreation Department uses a multiplatform guide, known as “Art In Parks,” to assist visitors and promote outdoor art within the parks system. Details about 91 pieces of municipal art in 24 parks across the city are made available in print, by cell phone, or the web.

Overall, the art along Buffalo Bayou has transformed this space into a key destination – for residents and visitors alike. Buffalo Bayou Park has also received prestigious external recognition, and was named a 2017 Urban Land Institute’s Global Awards for Excellence finalist. Described as a surprising, award-winning gem, this area has become a “must-see” for visitors and a respite for residents.



Pedestrian Bridge. 2013. Source: Jonnu Singleton, courtesy of Buffalo Bayou Partnership.

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The 606. Source: Caroline O'Boyle, courtesy of The Trust for Public Land. 2017.

## ENDNOTE

The Field Guide for Creative Placemaking in Parks is meant to do two things: build awareness and excitement about the role of the arts in public space and to convey knowledge and ideas about how to do so. However, this content can only take projects and partnerships so far. As each case study in this book has shown, these ideas take time to develop, they take collaboration with many kinds of stakeholders, and they take creativity and thoughtfulness. The Trust for Public Land and the City Parks Alliance are committed to helping to grow this work across the country. Future initiatives will ensure that projects can have the support and guidance necessary to realize their most ambitious goals.

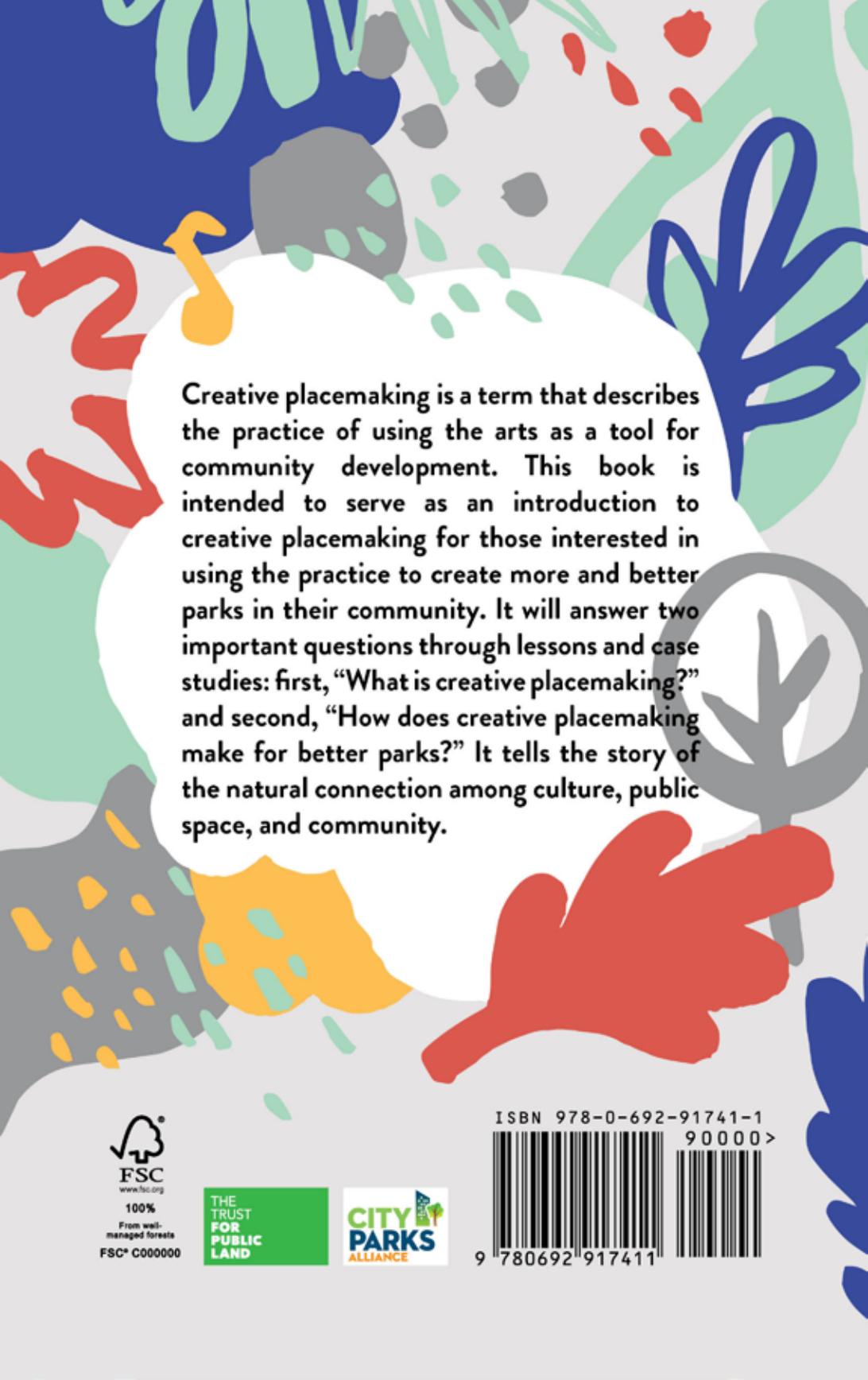
Our land and our parks represent cultural landscapes; they reflect who we are and where we intend to go as a people and as a society. The field of creative placemaking will only magnify the power of these places to change our lives for the better.

*- Matthew Clarke  
Director of Creative Placemaking  
The Trust for Public Land*

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Creative placemaking is a term that describes the practice of using the arts as a tool for community development. This book is intended to serve as an introduction to creative placemaking for those interested in using the practice to create more and better parks in their community. It will answer two important questions through lessons and case studies: first, “What is creative placemaking?” and second, “How does creative placemaking make for better parks?” It tells the story of the natural connection among culture, public space, and community.



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