

# How Organizations Evolve When They Embrace Arts and Culture

Victor Rubin



# Introduction

*“You want to build what? You want to put it where?”*

The combination of the social practice of art with community development can lead to serious dissonance with respect to styles and boundaries. The nonprofit sector builds affordable housing with government support or provides health care for low-income residents according to a massive and often arcane set of rules and financial constraints that have conditioned its practitioners to be very careful and attentive to detail. This ensures that they always know which services they will receive from each contractor for every dollar and commits them only to items for which spending is pre-authorized. Creativity is utilized more effectively when maneuvering the system to produce the best results for a project. In contrast, artists who seek to become engaged with society and local communities are experts at freeing and stoking not only their own imaginations, but also that of the people they work with, helping them to not only express themselves but to also become unbound by conventions and envision a radically different future.

What happens when these two very different approaches to transforming communities are combined with the time, resources, and support to create something new, while advancing the mission of community development organizations through arts and culture? This has been the challenge of a diverse group of organizations that went through this process over the past three years. The projects and partnerships were indeed challenging to design and execute, but the integration of arts into community development has taken root and changed these organizations' operations in important ways. This brief tells the story of that organizational growth and change.

The Community Development Investments (CDI) program was launched in 2015 by ArtPlace America to investigate and support place-based organizations to sustainably incorporate arts and culture into their core work. This one-time program provided \$3 million to each of six community planning and development organizations over three years, along with significant technical assistance on conceiving, executing, and financing creative placemaking projects aimed at achieving their missions more effectively and bringing about positive outcomes for their communities.

These investments have yielded valuable insights and lessons for a wide range of fields of practice, from affordable housing development to parks stewardship, from the social practice of art to youth development, from community organizing to public health.

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

This is the second of six briefs that describe these changes, insights, and lessons, based on the experiences of these organizations, the residents and other community members, and their partners in the arts. This brief focuses on how their experiences with arts and culture have changed the internal values, structures, and operations of the community development organizations, and the concrete methods by which the organizations implemented those changes.

Learning from experience has been a goal of the CDI program, and PolicyLink has been conducting this research with the program participants since 2015.<sup>1</sup> Each brief focuses on a different facet of our research framework, and together they provide a systematic introduction to the changes that have taken place in the communities. The overall documentation of the CDI program will also include publications, videos, and presentations from conferences for a range of audiences. The website [www.communitydevelopment.art](http://www.communitydevelopment.art) contains a wealth of materials about the CDI experiences, including these briefs, webinars, site-based project descriptions, video interviews with the staff, artists, and residents, and other information about the growing field of arts, culture, and equitable development.

# How Organizations Evolved through Embracing Arts and Culture

## Overall Direction

Incorporating arts and cultural strategies into core work resulted in changes in the culture, leadership, and future course of the organization. These included:

Finding new ways to express their core values, leading to greater organizational cohesion and more effective communications

Building greater capacity and openness to risk and experimentation

Identifying different definitions of success based on those values

Crafting more effective interactions with community members and partners

## Specific Implementation Steps

Incorporating arts and cultural strategies deeply in the organization meant actively aligning internal processes and structures. This included factors such as:

Assigning and sharing responsibilities throughout the staff for implementing arts and culture

Integrating arts into strategic planning processes

Diversifying staff and leadership

Bringing in artists as advisers and colleagues

# CDI Participants and Activities

## Cook Inlet Housing Authority

**Anchorage, Alaska**

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

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

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

## Fairmount Park Conservancy

**Philadelphia, Pennsylvania**

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

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

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

## Jackson Medical Mall Foundation

**Jackson, Mississippi**

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

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

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

## Little Tokyo Service Center

**Los Angeles, California**

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

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

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

## Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership

### Southwest Region of Minnesota

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

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

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

## Zuni Youth Enrichment Project

### Zuni, New Mexico

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

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

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

# The CDI Program: Incentives and Support for Organizational Change

The core concept underlying the CDI program was to strengthen the capacity of community development groups to fulfill their mission through arts and culture strategies. There was no intent for them to change that mission, nor to become cultural entities themselves. They undertook an array of discrete projects and the regranting of funds for individual artists and arts-focused groups, and their projects and activities brightened the landscape, improved the facilities, enlivened the discourse, and nourished the soul of each community. When the CDI projects and activities partnered with artists, designed buildings and spaces, or used cultural activities as a technique for community engagement, these were intended to be tools for accomplishing a larger goal. The organizations were invited to use arts and culture to think big, aim high, and find new ways to follow through on those aspirations.<sup>2</sup>

**Organizational Missions:** The six organizations comprise a unique mix of circumstances, cultural mixes, and opportunities for action, but they were all formed in response to the disinvestment and failures of private markets, often abetted by public policies, to meet the needs of low- and moderate-income residents for housing, health care, or municipal services. Three of the CDI grantee organizations are nonprofit housing and neighborhood developers, and though their roots and contexts are completely different, they share a common field of practice. Two of the grantees are providers of health and wellness services, very different organizations, but both were committed to moving beyond medical care to improve the “upstream” community factors<sup>3</sup> that determine so much of their populations’ health. One grantee is a citywide parks stewardship organization, interested in redefining its scope and deepening its relationship to its neighbors. They all share a commitment to revitalizing the communities in which they are based, not just the properties which they directly control.

**Populations Served:** The six selected communities reflect the country’s racial and ethnic diversity and range from some sites with many recent immigrants and refugees, to residents who have been on the same land for thousands of years. Some are in very hot real estate markets, and others in neighborhoods that have been systematically disinvested but might soon take off, with the threats to community identity and stability that such change implies. All of the organizations are working with communities which, while they have remarkable cultural assets and resilience, have been marginalized or put at severe risk by both historical and contemporary structural economic and social forces. They were chosen to represent a broad range of community development practices, and to include many regions of the United States in both urban and rural settings.

**Encouraging Creativity, Innovation, and Risk-Taking:**

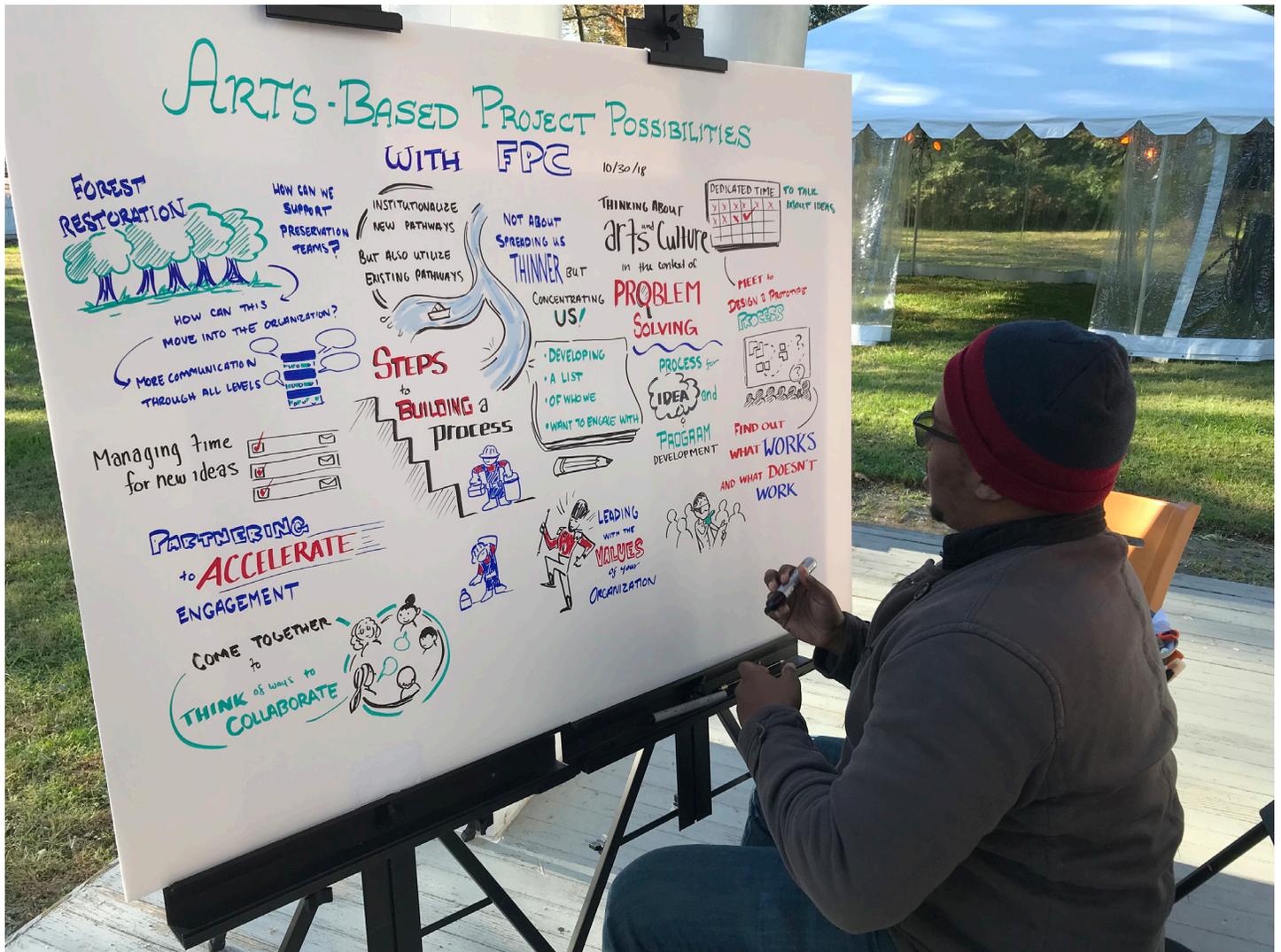
The CDI program engendered a hospitable environment for experimentation, professional growth, and cross-site sharing and learning. The initiative was designed to help these organizations, which are expert and effective in their own fields, expand their range of action and impact.<sup>4</sup> They began with open-ended exploration and mapping of community cultural assets prior to choosing big investments or starting major initiatives. This exploration period represented a change in organizational style for these task-oriented, highly focused groups. Building strong relationships with residents, artists, and organizations based in the same community requires trust as well as the recognition of mutual interests and common goals. They used the lessons from these early attempts to examine their assumptions and practices and fashion deeper and more effective partnerships.

Moreover, throughout the program, the creation of space for this “discovery potential”<sup>5</sup> was also prioritized by staff leading CDI work to solicit buy-in from fellow staff members. For example, most of the organizations held day-long workshops, led by the Center for Performance and Civic Practice in partnership with ArtPlace, to identify major goals and values, learn about artistic and creative practice, and work with artists to prototype potential projects and areas of exploration that embodied organizational goals. Many staff reported that these workshops were critical in helping them expand their imagination in the use of artistic practice to play a role in key priorities of the organization and address challenging issues in new ways.

Some of the organizations even created internal funds and structures to help staff members experiment, such as the Fairmount Park Conservancy's "Yes Lab" for staff-led creative placemaking projects, Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership's work with resident artist Ashley Hanson to develop small projects with staff members, and Little Tokyo Service Center's hiring of an embedded artist to work with department heads to develop projects that could address all of the organization's priorities.

Overall, the CDI program provided space for these six different organizations to experiment on their own terms, and to be responsive to the unique circumstances of their structures and context, rather than imposing a single learning path. The outcomes and the pathways for getting there look different for each of the six organizations, yet a lot can be learned from examining the two levels of change—first, how changes in leadership, vision, and future directions of the organization were inspired by incorporating arts and culture and, second, how the organization managed this change process internally.

Graphic artist Trevor Fraley illustrates conversations at Fairmount Park Conservancy around long-term integration of arts and culture. (*PolicyLink*)



# Arts-Inspired Changes in Organizational Leadership, Vision, and Goals

A common thread throughout the Community Development Investments organizations was the three-year evolution of their recognition of the value of operational change, even as they were being rewarded and recognized for their traditional expertise and impact. A nonprofit organization can be very effective and yet still question whether it has created conditions within which the community it represents can thrive. What is less common is the ability to act directly on those existential questions and develop into a stronger organization. The chief executive officers and other leaders of these organizations were deeply moved by this challenge, and the opportunity to act on it.

Organizations can face a gap between their practices and the voices, needs, and aspirations of the residents in the communities they serve, especially when engaging with low-income communities of color that have historically been marginalized or disinvested. Or, the community itself can change, and the new population will not have strong connections to the more established groups. These gaps between organization and community will remain if they are not addressed.

**For several of the CDI organizations, arts and culture strategies became the means to recognize this gap, trigger a reassessment, and build the necessary bridges to incorporate community-oriented listening and collaboration into their long-term plans.** Arts and culture strategies became the perfect lever and vehicle for change. The groups were acting in response not only to their immediate surroundings but also to the social, economic, and political forces which shape their respective fields. The stories of each field follow, beginning with housing and neighborhood development.

## The culture change underway in the field of neighborhood development and nonprofit housing

Ever since the formation of community development corporations in the 1960s, countervailing incentives and motivations have pulled nonprofit developers in two directions: to become proficient and effective at financing and building affordable housing and community facilities that operate efficiently, or to address the much more open-ended, social, cultural, and economic challenges that underlie persistent poverty and health inequities in their neighborhoods. This pendulum swings back and forth for these organizations between narrowly scoped projects and ambitious community revitalization and, lately, arts and culture strategies are proving to be more than just a random grant opportunity; they are providing the reasons and the tools to address a broader mandate.

Three of the CDI organizations are directly involved in housing and neighborhood development: Cook Inlet Housing Authority, Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership, and Little Tokyo Service Center. Their integration of arts and culture strategies triggered changes in how they saw themselves, how they understood the world, and how they acted in the world. These groups are just three of the scores of housing and neighborhood development organizations which have taken up arts and cultural strategies, often with the training and support of national intermediaries such as the Local Initiative Support Corporation, Enterprise Community Partners, and NeighborWorks America.

Cook Inlet Housing Authority (CIHA) is a tribal housing authority working with, and on behalf of, Alaska Natives while also very intentionally serving the entire population in and around Anchorage. CIHA produces and manages affordable housing and has the nonprofit development expertise to sustain its substantial portfolio. CIHA is recognized nationally as a leader in this field and as an important institution in Anchorage. But, despite this growth and efficacy, the leaders sensed that something important was missing.



**How do we still be an Alaska Native organization that meets our mission... while at the same time lifting other cultures, and honoring and respecting them, but letting them know that people and place matter to us.**

— Carol Gore,  
President and CEO, Cook Inlet Housing Authority,  
on navigating the changing nature of the organization

For CIHA President and CEO Carol Gore, the attention to culture was personal as well as organizational, and ran deeper than any particular artistic endeavor. She used the CDI opportunity to articulate and reemphasize Alaska Native village values as a foundation for CIHA. As an Alaska Native woman nurtured by those values in her youth, but at risk of losing touch with them while working in the urban setting, she sought to reintegrate a sense of shared communal responsibility and the linkage of the health of individuals and the health of the group. Gore explained,

I think for us, we were trying to navigate: how do we still be an Alaska Native organization that meets our mission of empowering our people, building community and providing housing opportunities, while at the same time lifting other cultures, and honoring and respecting them, but letting them know that people and place matter to us and they have a unique meaning. Can we share that together?<sup>6</sup>

For the managers of CIHA tasked with bringing arts and culture to fruition in the diverse Spenard neighborhood, such a change in values would have to translate into a change in the activities and decision-points that shape the organization. The regulation-driven, cost-focused, time-is-money calculus of developing and managing nonprofit housing had to find new strategies to allow for the greater risk and uncertainty associated with creativity, innovation, new voices, and broader goals for community-level change.

That shift to becoming open to new possibilities was a major change for CIHA. Tyler Robinson and Sezy Gerow-Hanson, the project leaders for the arts and culture work, who led different divisions of the agency (Community Development, Real Estate and Planning for Robinson, and Public and Resident Relations for Gerow-Hanson) met frequently with their fellow division leaders from the onset of each new arts-based project, to find the ways in which the innovations might be of value. They

shared with PolicyLink that they often had to make the case for arts and culture in terms that were relevant to their colleagues by addressing questions about:

- How it could help their colleagues meet their own responsibilities;
- How it could achieve better outcomes for the residents;
- How it wouldn't endanger project finances or timelines;
- How it would advance the CEO's goal for the broader culture change; and
- How it would be colorful, entertaining, energizing, and aesthetically rewarding.

These were not one-way presentations, but dialogues where colleagues provided input, received answers to their questions or at least had them addressed, and were given the chance to join in the process of change. Over three years, the effort gradually resulted in a significant integration and acceptance of the core ideas underlying the arts and culture work, and a well-thought-through process for assessing new arts projects.

CIHA's resulting portfolio of arts and cultural projects and strategies represented a reexamination of what it means to succeed as an urban tribal housing authority. Leaders now define its impact as an organization not only by the quality of its housing, but also by how it worked with artists in numerous, experimental ways, took a larger role in community-scale change, and established an anchor for social interaction in the Spenard neighborhood. The CIHA staff came to realize that well-executed cultural strategies were not only good for the community and their residents, but that facilitating in this new, more open-ended, unobtrusive way enhanced CIHA's own reputation. As Robinson said, "We're leaders, but [as part of the CDI experience] we've learned how to not always lead."<sup>7</sup>

CIHA enabled more than a dozen arts-related projects during the CDI grant period, ranging from eye-catching and whimsical placemaking (e.g., mimes humanizing a commercial street construction site, and the rescuing of a local landmark—a neon-covered statue of a palm tree) to support for the crafts-based enterprises of Native artisans. CIHA, with a significant amount of community input, led the renovation and management of the Church of Love, an arts-based community center based in a once-vacant church building. This was not only a large and tangible capital commitment but a symbol of the organization's evolution from principally a housing developer to a full-fledged community anchor. The Church of Love has not only quickly become a reflection of the diverse

neighborhood's identity but also a vehicle for greater engagement by CIHA, neighbors, and artists in the planning, zoning, and urban design issues faced by Anchorage city government in Spenard.

The immediate effects of all these activities were specific to funky, bohemian Spenard, where artists, craft-based entrepreneurs, and their supporters were numerous but, by the end of the CDI grant period, CIHA had established an internal process by which they were incorporating arts and culture strategies into development, management, and engagement with residents of properties in other parts of their region. These new processes also directly resulted in the creation of a new Community Development Department within the organization. That new department can now initiate and assess new opportunities to deploy arts and culture strategies.

Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership (SWMHP) and Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC) provide services beyond affordable housing, but they each faced their own version of the challenge encountered by CIHA: how can organizations whose principal work is often defined by project-financing deals and tenant services discover—or rediscover—a path toward more comprehensive community building?

Small towns in Minnesota are a world away from downtown Los Angeles, but there was a common theme to the urgent issues for SWMHP and LTSC. Both groups saw that they had a compelling responsibility to work with residents and partners to define their communities in the image of their current residents, and to then help them express a future for those communities that would include them. In both places, the arts and cultural strategies that were designed to inform and engage the public and influence local government also led to fundamental changes in how these organizations carried out their work long term. As experienced by Cook Inlet Housing Authority, the initial period was awkward, and in fact there was skepticism throughout each organization about the methods and relevance generated under the new grant, and with related responsibilities remaining highly compartmentalized. But gradually, as the artist-led processes began to show impact and the value of these approaches began to be more widely understood, key leaders and staff within the organization saw their unique advantages for reaching broader social and political goals.

In a graphic timeline of their CDI journey, Little Tokyo Service Center notes a critical pivot in their journey toward bringing an artist on staff. ([PolicyLink](#))



“ ”

**For Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership, the involvement of artists led to lifting up the experiences and aspirations of newcomer communities, such as Latinx and Micronesians, in ways that brought them into constructive interaction with the longstanding majority population.**



**Little Tokyo Service Center in Los Angeles found that the CDI experience provided the space and resources for their allies to collaborate to preserve their community's identity.**

For Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership, this value lay in partnering with artists to make the experiences and aspirations of newcomer communities visible, including Latinx and Micronesians, in ways that brought them into constructive interaction with the longstanding majority population of predominantly Scandinavian descent. That arts-fueled civic dialogue was the starting point for collaborative planning for improvements to SWMHP-managed housing and the local communities more generally. As these efforts moved ahead in three communities in the region, leaders at the agency realized that they provided the proof of concept necessary to interest and engage the rest of the staff. Artist-in-residence Ashley Hanson had a major impact on the outlook and practices of the SWMHP staff and the organization, bringing a more holistic, creative approach to their design and decision-making, and paying more attention to the cultures of their increasingly diverse communities. Hanson described it in 2019:

...Going through the same interviews in the story circle process that I do in creating plays, to discover where the organization is at, and to highlight challenges that the individuals have, or where they're feeling underutilized or that the potential isn't fully there for them to step into their creativity. And then being able to create a process by which to use the internal creativity of the individuals to address those challenges... In those moments, we could ask what projects folks are working on and find ways for community engagement in creative strategies to enhance that work, without it being a planned meeting. It's just this more spontaneous deepness of being; being in place with the staff.<sup>8</sup>

As Rick Goodemann, former executive director, put it in a 2018 interview shortly before he retired, "Arts and culture is not a thing we do, but the way we work."<sup>9</sup> For Hanson and for longtime staff member and CDI Project Director Chelsea Alger, Goodemann's endorsement represented a powerful transformation of the organization, and during 2019 they sought to see it maintained as the agency searched for a new chief executive. Alger said,

...Many of the people, myself included, who started on this journey have moved on or are moving on. So the fact that we were able to bring the [arts and cultural strategies] across the organization rather than keeping it in a single staff person or department is so important. We know it will be a factor in the success of it living on beyond the work we did in this program.<sup>10</sup>

For Little Tokyo Service Center (LTSC), the new approach meant using cultural projects developed jointly with other local groups as well as individual artists to tell the story of the community and buttress its claim for "moral site control" of key property sites in the rapidly gentrifying neighborhood, the historic and still vibrant Japantown. LTSC had more prior experience with cultural issues than the other CDI organizations, but the new opportunity greatly enhanced their leaders' understanding of their place in the neighborhood ecosystem and how to take maximum advantage of that. LTSC added staff members with arts experience to their planning division and promoted cultural strategies across the organization. The CDI experience also provided the space and resources for their allies to evolve. As Planning Director Grant Sunoo put it,

I think at a certain part of the journey, I started thinking about arts and culture and creative placekeeping as an "ecosystem" within our community. We have been able to focus much more intently on what LTSC's role is within that ecosystem, particularly given that this is a community with a really rich history of artists and cultural institutions that are doing great work in that space... There are many organizations who have always been great neighbors but hadn't necessarily seen their role as community developers in the way that I think they have now evolved to, through our more recent partnerships.<sup>11</sup>

The partnership led to the alliance known as Sustainable Little Tokyo, which remains a significant force helping to shape the future of the neighborhood after the CDI grant period has ended.

## Making parks a key component of equitable communities

The promise of local parks has been that they are genuinely accessible to people of all backgrounds. Parks get less attention and lower priority among intense urban issues when basic safety, health, education, and economic survival are at risk, but they are an essential feature of any healthy community. The informal good times and beauty of these natural and designed settings can mask how challenging—and costly—it is to create and run a strong and equitable local parks system. Urban parks can also lose their connection to surrounding communities to the point where they are dangerous, or otherwise uninviting to residents. Parks need to be continually revitalized if not reinvented, and they require a lot of funding and volunteer effort to be well maintained and truly open to all. The importance of parks for community life has led to the establishment of sizable conservancies in major cities, including the Fairmount Park Conservancy (FPC) in Philadelphia. These nonprofit entities raise and apply private resources to augment and maintain the park system beyond what a municipal government could do on its own.

In recent years, the concept of “parks equity” has taken root as a way to express the importance of making these assets accessible and relevant for people of every cultural background, economic standing, mobility level, age, and gender identity.<sup>12</sup> Parks equity in the full sense requires not only fair funding but also effective processes for defining and designing projects that reflect the values and priorities of the residents. For parks support groups, committing to parks equity in all its dimensions can require a radically different approach, and a fair amount of risk and experimentation. That is an environment well-suited for arts and cultural strategies.

Fairmount Park Conservancy was well established as the steward and champion of Philadelphia’s citywide parks system and historic houses, and probably could have continued in that familiar role, raising private funds, designing and supervising scores of capital projects, and being a prominent voice for the value of open space and historic preservation. But, there was ample evidence that their familiar approach would not build the new kinds of relationships and partnerships that would be needed.<sup>13</sup> FPC had been criticized by some city elected officials in the preparation period for Rebuild, a major parks and recreation bond issue, for not having staff or board racial diversity that would be reflective of the community they serve. Around the same time, residents of Strawberry Mansion, the neighborhood on the east side of Fairmount Park, expressed

Staff of health organizations at Jackson Medical Mall generate ideas for the facility at an event organized by significant developments, *cultural strategists*. (daniel johnson)



their disapproval for a proposed FPC capital project known as “Mander to the River” which was viewed as being less beneficial for neighborhood residents than it was for outsiders.

The circumstances were therefore conducive for Fairmount Park Conservancy to approach its work in a fundamentally different way. FPC staff were accustomed to initiating, and securing the funding and direction for, capital projects. In order to break that pattern, they had to learn to listen to resident voices and consciously decide to help the neighborhood lift up and celebrate their identity. As former executive director Jamie Gauthier, who joined FPC about a year into the CDI period stated,

We have had to be more transparent, work differently, intensify the community engagement work that we’re doing, and build a broader table.<sup>14</sup>

This took the form of leading not by improving FPC’s physical centerpieces—the historic houses and parks—but with the values, priorities, and cultural identity of the community as the residents chose to express them. Strawberry Mansion is a low-income, African American community whose substantial cultural and historical assets had been obscured by blight, abandoned property, and decades of persistent poverty. Fairmount Park Conservancy made the choice to activate the Hatfield House, a largely unused historic house in that neighborhood, to become an important gathering place. Hatfield, which many residents had never been inside of or known about, became an artistic hub centered on the history and culture bearers of Strawberry Mansion. Public art and landscape projects in the park nearby were similarly grounded in neighbors’ priorities and their sense of history. This could

only happen once the local community development corporation and local artists took the lead in shaping the project and making nearby residents feel welcome.

Once the organization committed to working so extensively at the neighborhood level and began asking what the community needed from the park rather than what the park needed, everything about their approach needed to be rethought. As project manager Adela Park stated,

When I look at the evolution of the organization, I think it was probably more common even just a few years ago to really lead with, ‘These are the challenges of this neighborhood that we’re working in and this is why we need investment in the park.’ I think that, particularly with the work that we’ve been doing in Strawberry Mansion, the mindset is shifting, and I think that we have really been trying to lead with the positive aspects and how investing in those assets or the park can really strengthen and build upon those assets.<sup>15</sup>

FPC’s arts and culture learning journey included challenges and restarts, and after three years, the emergence of stronger, more productive relationships with community-based organizations, including the Strawberry Mansion CDI. Fairmount Park Conservancy also developed, through intense interactions and negotiation, a good working relationship with civic practice artists, such as the Amber Art and Design collective, who helped to elevate the visibility of the neighborhood’s cultural assets. Having established this new culturally grounded, arts-driven, neighborhood-focused approach, FPC will hopefully ensure that its future work is guided by similar values.

The concepts underlying parks equity also led, in a very different context, to the process by which artists and others in the Zuni Pueblo were able to co-create the H’on A:wan Park. In that case, a youth development agency grounded in child and adolescent health saw a unique placemaking opportunity in building a park, and in realizing it unexpectedly transformed their own organization as well. We describe that agency’s growth and change in the next section.



**After a three-year arts and culture journey, the Fairmount Park Conservancy in Philadelphia has seen the emergence of stronger, more productive relationships with community-based organizations.**

## **Health-care providers: Going upstream means a different understanding of community**

The United States health-care system is largely organized around the delivery of medical services, relatively deemphasizing not only public health outreach, prevention, and education, but also attention to the root causes of poor health and the health inequities driven by poverty and structural racism. The consistent empirical finding that medical care accounts for only about 20 percent of the population’s health has not tilted the scale toward addressing the “upstream” social and environmental determinants of health in a proportional manner. However, research which supports the need to move upstream has been growing over the last two decades, and much of it identifies a significant role for community organizers.<sup>16</sup> Two of the Community Development Investments organizations drew on arts and culture strategies to focus on these upstream determinants, strengthening health-supportive social and economic factors outside of the doctor’s office.

The Zuni Youth Enrichment Project has always offered a set of core activities for young people, including sports programs, summer camps, and community gardens. In that respect, ZYEP was already addressing the social determinants of health, seeking to foster fitness, positive social environments, and a diet that is not only healthier but also relevant to Zuni agricultural tradition. Zuni youth and their families face daunting challenges of historical trauma and enduring poverty, leaving them at risk for mental health issues, including suicide. Dr. Tom Faber, founder and co- director of ZYEP, deemed arts and culture critical to creating a “safe, stable, nurturing environment.”<sup>17</sup> This meant more than physical safety in the immediate sense: it reflected ZYEP’s shift to becoming more trauma-informed and resilience-based over the course of three years. For Faber, as a pediatrician, the new perspective on resilience has shaped everything from individual clinical visits, to group activities for kids and the design of the park.

The Zuni Youth Enrichment Project designed and led the creation of this new park to greatly expand the reach of their initiatives and provide a new center for community gathering. It was deeply imbued with Zuni art, culture, and expression of traditional beliefs in every phase of its design and construction. Art is essential and integral to life at the Zuni Pueblo—to the economic and spiritual resilience of the culture. ZYEP recognized the power of engaging Zuni artists in the park planning process, through the creation of a six-member



**The leaders of the Zuni Youth Enrichment Project in Zuni, New Mexico, found that the experience of creating a park and community center in collaboration with artists who incorporated Zuni tradition and Pueblo residents' input will guide their ongoing programs with young people and their relationships with other groups.**

advisory committee, to give input on the design of a park that would address a broad set of psychological and social needs beyond physical activity.<sup>18</sup> For ZYEP co-director Joseph Claunch, his own Native background in the Puyallup Tribe had given him a first-hand understanding of comparable trauma and the conditions for resilience. However, it wasn't until he was immersed in the process of designing the park that he fully realized and embraced the power of the arts in transmitting cultural tradition, and what it could mean for young people.<sup>19</sup> For a self-described football jock and coach, albeit one with a doctorate in psychology, the process was revelatory, and will change the way he approaches youth development from now on. Claunch reflected on it in February 2019 and in published form in November 2019:

The CDI process helped deepen my understanding of youth development in a tribal community. The artists we were working with helped me understand how we could do youth development on a much deeper level and more contextually, in a way that was really culturally responsive. I don't think I could've learned those things in the university. I couldn't have learned them by reading a book. This project helped me create space to just sit and listen to community, what they have to say, what they want for their youth and how they want to go about it. That has been an invaluable process for three years to make space for that.<sup>20</sup>

The learning that Claunch describes has become the basis for ongoing organizational practices within ZYEP. Creating the park and community center through collaborating with the artists, incorporating Zuni tradition, and generating community input based in a deep appreciation of trauma and resilience will guide their ongoing programs with young people and their relationships with other groups. ZYEP leaders and artists also believe that the experience has raised expectations and changed the rules of the game for how other properties in Zuni will be designed and developed.

The Jackson Medical Mall is a former shopping center that was turned into a medical resource center, with a large and varied range of health operations, visited by several thousand people daily. When the CDI program began, 20 years after the Mall was first created, its leaders in the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation (JMMF) were confident that they had built a unique and essential community asset. However, they also believed that they could be doing more to improve the health of the surrounding community. Their new venture into arts and culture was to become the catalyst for acting on that belief. Similar to the experience of the Cook Inlet Housing Authority, the Medical Mall leaders were ready to move beyond the constraints of their normal practice to achieve that broader goal.

The JMMF sought to become an influential anchor for community revitalization, and to address the physical and social issues that lead to so many health inequities, from diabetes, hypertension, and obesity to the trauma, injuries, and death due to violence. This awareness of the economic and environmental conditions of the nearby lower income, predominantly African American communities led Mall leaders to the recognition that they should relate to their patients as neighbors and potential partners.

Arts and culture strategies offered a promising path for strengthening these relationships and redefining the path to health. As Primus Wheeler, executive director of JMMF said,

We view health care totally differently now than we did in the past. Health care to us was nurses and doctors and clinics. Now, we're providing a lot of wraparound services. For example, during our first year as a CDI participant we did a blues concert during National Diabetes Month. Everybody who came to the concert received information about diabetes and we incentivized them to get screening tests. We know there were folks who wouldn't have gotten screened, gone to one of the clinics, or may not have even known what was going on at the Medical Mall.<sup>21</sup>

The first strategy, then, was to use the arts as a draw, to activate the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation as a center for local culture, a vibrant ongoing site for musical performances, festivals, and exhibitions of folk arts that have been numerous and broad-based enough to draw in thousands of Jacksonians. In addition to establishing this more welcoming and colorful venue, the events provide the chance to offer preventive and educational services to large numbers of children, families, and individuals.

Once they had been connected to the JMMF through its cultural offerings, JMMF found ways to engage the residents to solicit their opinions and desires not just about the JMMF space, but also the surrounding community. The JMMF employed informal and formal conversations, roundtable discussions, community meetings, and surveys to draw out the residents' perspectives. Hearing from the neighbors, patients, and clients led to a culture change for the leadership of the JMMF. These more intense and extensive stakeholder engagements were both humbling and energizing. The leaders realized that they should interact with their visitors not as passive medical consumers, but as active partners in a shared, continually changing community. Primus Wheeler described his realization that the leadership should not feel secure that they had their role all figured out, and that they needed to be open to significant changes. As JMMF Arts and Culture Coordinator Mahalia Wright stated,

The great thing about our community is that they share their likes and dislikes, so we really have learned to embrace that. We want to hear the pros and the cons and make those cons into our strengths.<sup>22</sup>



**The Jackson Medical Mall Foundation in Jackson, Mississippi, strengthened community relationships and redefined the path to health by using arts events as a draw, where they could offer preventive and educational services.**

To signify their new direction, the JMMF broadened the mission statement on their website during the CDI program from one of simply addressing the needs of the medically underserved, to “eliminating health disparities holistically through the promotion of creativity and innovation.” They see that creativity and innovation being applied to community economic development, as well as to better health. The organization updated its vision statement in the same expansive spirit, “to be the leader in healthcare, economic, artistic, and technological development.” As shown in the next section, JMMF followed up on their new mission and vision through an internal planning process with employees, led by an arts-focused strategist.

Staff at Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership celebrate their journey in incorporating arts and cultural strategies through “The Wonderful Wizard of Arts,” a play written by partner artist, Ashley Hanson. *(Ashley Hanson)*



# Aligning Processes and Structures to Deeply Incorporate Arts and Cultural Strategies

Given these new expressions of values, changes in directions, and recognition of the larger systems within which they operated, how did the leaders of these groups translate their intentions into action? The most compelling visions for change will remain at the level of inspiring statements or aspirations charted at a retreat unless the agency's core functions are reorganized to place time, talent, energy, and leadership behind the changes. A core aspiration of the CDI program was not just to provide a one-time grant to support work within a specific time period, but to encourage the organizations to determine how this work can provide added value as a long-term organizational practice that lasts beyond a single grant.

Maintaining a place for arts and culture calls for organizations to develop a set of competencies within staff and structures to establish this body of work for the long term. The competencies represent a combination of learning needs articulated by the organizations, observations about stumbling blocks, and data gathered over time from working with each organization to develop its own approach to long-term change. They include the capacity to:

- Conceive arts-based opportunities
- Understand and map the cultural fabric of community
- Align internal assets
- Secure external capital
- Realize partnerships
- Facilitate community processes
- Learn and iterate
- Communicate

These competencies, which are important for community development practice in general but take on particular qualities for arts and culture, will be the subject of a brief later in this series, in mid-2020.<sup>23</sup>

The six CDI organizations each created their own framework for incorporating arts and culture into their operations. They each developed distinct ways to sustain their goals into the future. This variation is expected because the organizations launched the CDI program with different staff capacities and different histories with art, design, creative placemaking, and the integration of cultural themes into their work. Nonetheless, patterns have emerged in the groups' implementation of their new strategies, patterns which should be useful for other organizations seeking to take up this opportunity. Four categories of change or innovation were undertaken by these groups which are discussed next:

- Assigning and sharing responsibilities throughout their staff for implementing arts and culture
- Diversifying staff and leadership
- Integrating arts into strategic planning processes
- Bringing in artists as advisers and colleagues

## Assigning and sharing responsibilities

When incorporating a new area of practice into an existing nonprofit organization, is it essential to bring in new talent to design and lead it? With an area as different from past activities as arts and culture, the CDI organizations might well have taken that approach. But while some key specialists were hired, the groups vested authority for the program in current senior staff members, and their reliance on these leaders set the tone for a high level of attention by chief executives and substantive integration into the organization's operations and activities.

Each Community Development Investments organization assigned leadership for the program to one or two senior staff members.<sup>24</sup> They provided continuity of management and served as the face of their organization, at least initially, in the myriad partnerships and other external relationships. These senior staff helped identify new opportunities and strategized about how and where the work would fit in structurally. In each organization, at least one of these CDI leaders were managers of divisions and maintained many of their existing duties. Their standing as senior managers was essential to making the case for the importance of arts and culture to the CEO and their colleagues. The senior staff's effectiveness at "managing up and across" was enhanced by the peer exchanges, technical assistance, and other guidance provided by ArtPlace, which created a mutually supportive community among the leaders from the six organizations.

A second common staffing pattern was to hire a new staff member to directly implement the projects and manage relationships. The new hires brought backgrounds in community development and/or arts and cultural strategies, and worked intensively with all three constituencies—staff, artists, and the community—to bring the activities and partnerships to life.

In each site, at least one key CDI leader has remained on the staff after the grant period ended, and in four of the six, those individuals are in senior management with an organization-wide scope of responsibility for sustaining this type of work. The two most formal changes were enacted in Anchorage and Jackson:

- The approach used by division directors at the Cook Inlet Housing Authority for vetting potential arts and culture endeavors with colleagues, described in an earlier section, has been codified in a structural change to the organization, through the creation of a new Community Development Department headed by a Vice President who had been the CDI project co-director.

- The Jackson Medical Mall Foundation involved the largest number of staff engaged during the project period and has cultivated a permanent expectation among them that arts and culture will be a part of everyday business and all new initiatives, coordinated by a Vice President, Arts and Culture, who joined the management team during the CDI program period.

The Community Development Investments organizations varied in how widely they shared information and responsibility for the arts and culture strategies across their employee base. The Jackson Medical Mall Foundation had the broadest range of job functions, routinely engaging staff in every department from Facilities to Security to the Executive Office in staff meetings and assignments devoted to CDI activities. The arts-driven approach informed, motivated, and changed familiar ways of thinking for the JMMF leadership and staff, as chief of staff Erica Reed recounted:

Through the check-in calls, the technical assistance visits, the site visits, early on we had not only our CEO, Mr. Wheeler, but our whole staff involved in everything that we did. And [they learned that] if they didn't involve Mahalia [Wright] and the art and culture department, it wasn't [going to become] a project or an event. We didn't involve just the art and culture department, we involved every department. We have about 150 employees and various divisions of the Medical Mall Foundation. And so [for] our staff, the community, our tenants, and the artists, everything had to have art related to every event. We still have our challenges, like any organization, where we have to remind individuals that if you don't include art in the programs, it won't be something that we will do.<sup>25</sup>

Mahalia Wright added that their arts-focused adviser, Daniel Johnson, made a significant effort to engage with everyone as artists:

[Daniel] had a creative way of working with our employees in their particular departments. Once he spent a whole day with the Maintenance Department in his jumpsuit working with them up on top of the building, just looking at different things. He went with our security; he couldn't put on a uniform, but he was with the security. Then he spent time with Environmental Services and they became comfortable. It wasn't just 'the artist over here and Mahalia and Mr. Wheeler got a new project, how long is it going to last?' [The artists] didn't just go sit in a corner, [they said]: "Look, I want to know what you're doing because I'm going to be embedded." I thought that was a very great way to entwine and create these new relationships.<sup>26</sup>

## Diversifying staff and leadership

An organization seeking to support and make the cultural expressions of lower income communities of color more visible will be more effective when it has a social connection to those communities.<sup>27</sup> By social connection we mean a way in which the project leaders can understand and relate to the community through common life experiences as well as through their knowledge, professional skills, and empathy. One measure of that social connection is the diversity, with reference to race, ethnicity, and lived experiences, of the staff working on the projects. The CDI organizations varied at the outset in their internal diversity and how well their staff reflected the composition of the communities they served. There is no precise way to measure the specific impact of the arts and culture initiatives on the organizations' personnel changes, or to isolate this factor in the intentions at work in the hiring process, but there were some substantial changes, with a distinct story for the experience of each organization.

At Fairmount Park Conservancy, Jamie Gauthier, an African American and veteran of community development in Philadelphia, became the CEO in 2017. Her arrival and subsequent approach to working with neighborhoods increased the capacity and credibility of FPC, which has a predominantly White staff, as a partner to the Strawberry Mansion CDC and other grassroots groups.<sup>28</sup> As a matter of FPC policy, the contracts for arts coordinators and designers for Strawberry Mansion projects went to organizations led by people of color.

The Zuni Youth Enrichment Project, founded by White physicians and a board of directors drawn from among the Zuni nation, hired a Native American co-director with deep experience in working with Indigenous youth. As noted above, although Joe Claunch is not Zuni, he drew extensively on both his personal and professional background in placing local artists and their traditions at the center of the park and youth development project.

Across Southwest Minnesota, Pacific Islander, Southeast Asian, Latinx, and African populations have settled in different communities. The Southwest Minnesota Housing Partnership did not have a very diverse staff when the CDI program began, and few staff positions became available during the program, so there was little opportunity to reflect in its staff the region's newly diverse immigrant populations. The change was more evident in the new sensitivity that the organization—and the existing staff—gave to the racially diverse communities, intergroup relations, and promoting the civic engagement of leaders in those communities. One of many positive outcomes of their deepening emphasis on social and cultural equity was the first-time appointment of a Latinx community member to the local community Housing Committee in St James. The organization is also seeking to increase the diversity of its staff and board members as new positions come available.

The Little Tokyo Service Center, based in the Japanese American experience, hired and assigned staff members for the CDI program who reflected the great ethnic diversity of Los Angeles, including African American and Filipina as well as Japanese and Korean American project staff. This had a positive effect when working with the changing population of LTSC's home district and reinforced the multicultural themes of some of their cultural activities.

Regardless of their individual ethnic backgrounds or their prior engagement with these issues, all staff who participated in these arts and cultural strategies became thoroughly immersed in issues of how ethnicity and race shape community identity, and how the challenges posed by institutional and structural racism need to be addressed. A number of staff members conveyed in interviews and dialogues that these conversations led to a heightened level of awareness, and they described qualities and intentions that are sometimes called "cultural humility,"<sup>29</sup> which we expect will help the agencies to better reflect the communities being served.

## Integrating arts into strategic planning processes

Several of the groups have recently completed strategic plans that were significantly influenced by their new engagement with arts and culture. The two most advanced examples are from Philadelphia and Jackson.

These new relationships and ways of working in Strawberry Mansion informed Fairmount Park Conservancy's strategic planning process—both in terms of the process and the plan itself. FPC requested that their consultant include an artist in the process. And, in their new strategic plan, FPC has committed to expanding into several new areas that were informed by the arts-based models they experimented with in CDI, including:

- Becoming systematic about making more connections in the community development arena;
- Being a convener for a larger citywide conversation about public space; and
- Elevating preservation work in their business development; conducting community engagement; and taking a serious look at diversity, equity and inclusion.

Ellen Ryan, senior director of strategy and planning, confirmed that this process led to the conclusion that,

The Conservancy did a strategic plan this past year, and it really helped our organization—which has been very opportunistic and growing very fast—to understand how we might reach maturity. How do we begin to say no to some projects? We're often pulled into things that might not be our core mission. Rebranding our mission statement and describing our values in plain language has also given us the opportunity to ensure that arts and culture are a bedrock—just as community engagement is—to our mission and the way we work.<sup>30</sup>

This approach would also help FPC if in the future it were to take on a project in Rebuild, the city's massive parks and recreation facilities rehabilitation initiative. Fairmount Park Conservancy has been certified by the city as a nonprofit partner, qualified to manage Rebuild projects in partnership with four other agencies.<sup>31</sup> The criteria for this certification were:

- Successful design and construction of projects, totaling at least \$1 million
- Experience working with communities
- A commitment to diversity and inclusion

These criteria are reflected in the FPC strategic planning process described above and meeting the second and third ones reflects significant progress when compared to the period before the CDI experience. Their move into the broader domain of community development, driven by their arts-focused experiences, appears to be on track to become a sustained part of the organization.

Jackson Medical Mall Foundation leaders have been integrating their new organizational strategic plan with a concurrent exploration that focused directly on how arts and culture can help achieve their goals. The overall plan aims to create opportunities for new housing, community gardens, and reuse of vacant commercial properties outside the facility, as well as continuing the Mall's revitalization. The projects implemented inside and outside the Mall will be arts-focused initiatives.

The broader strategic plan was informed by a more specialized inquiry done in late 2017. daniel johnson's arts-centered advisory firm, known as significant developments, provided a strategic document specifically about JMMF's "cultural production." This was a multifaceted set of assessments and recommendations that touched on every function and department and every part of the facility.<sup>32</sup> The plan described it this way: "our final report gives a snapshot of the current cross-section of perceptions within the organization and community and suggests common narrative threads among them." "Cultural Production" was not a distinct function so much as a theme and commitment running through everyone's work. The report proposed that a holistic approach to culture would reinforce JMMF's intended holistic approach to health and wellness. JMMF leaders are now planning to sustain the level of innovation and engagement found in their CDI-supported projects, to take on the recommendations of the Cultural Production report, and to arrange for new investments in local health and well-being in the neighborhood.

## Bringing in artists as advisers and colleagues

The artists and arts consultants brought in by the community development organizations not only extended those organizations' reach into the neighborhoods and towns, they also provided a new and different kind of guidance and support for the CDI partners. These artistic contributors were not only producers and performers but also formidable organizers and strategists. In the first brief in our series, *Working with Artists to Deepen Impact*, we documented the practices through which these collaborations were constructed.<sup>33</sup> In this section, we list several ways in which the artists helped change the CD organizations.

- **The artists created new and very different environments for resident engagement and expression of community assets.** This happened dramatically in Philadelphia, where the gatherings in the Hatfield House and other projects organized by Amber Art and Design and Ethnologica not only engaged many residents but convinced FPC to continue engaging in work that supports cultural preservation and community-driven programs, particularly in marginalized communities.
- **The artists arranged and carried out signature novel events and performances and produced innovative visual representations of the local culture.** Little Tokyo, Anchorage, and Southwest Minnesota were among the

places where artists developed very innovative forms of artistic expression that created energy, excitement, and insight into critical current issues and the historical record. The participatory filmmaking about Little Tokyo's post-World War II "Bronzeville" period, and the community play set in a rural Minnesota town called "This Land is Milan" were just two of many examples of this new kind of engagement. These activities were implemented through practices that CDI organizations can replicate in the future, after the performances are over and the exhibits have come down.

- **They advised the organizations on how to integrate and maintain the arts in their core mission and business, extend its reach to the wider staff, and develop productive working relationships with local artists.** The Center for Performance and Civic Practice assisted all six groups to find their own paths. In Southwest Minnesota and in Jackson, as noted above, the artist advisers Ashley Hanson and Daniel Johnson worked extensively to deepen the engagement of their large staff.

Through the negotiations on framing artists' assignments and contracting for these services, the CDI organizations became much more sophisticated about how the civic practice of art can operate at the local level. They are now well suited to continue these kinds of partnerships. The CDI organizations' staff have acknowledged the complexities of initiating these arrangements, but they also confirmed that it was worth the effort for past projects and for the future.

Carol Gore and Tyler Robinson of the Cook Inlet Housing Authority talk with artist Chad Taylor about *Reclaiming Asphalt*, a design project which helped make Spenard Road a more welcoming, people-centered place. (*Cook Inlet Housing Authority*)



# Conclusion

Through designing and carrying out myriad arts and cultural strategies, the CDI organizations opened themselves up to new ways of seeing the world, thinking, and acting, and in so doing have evolved in important ways. They found through this new work a reinforcement and extension of their mission and values, and a strengthening of their connection to neighbors and constituents.

- These community development groups integrated new skills, capacities, competencies, and backgrounds into their staff's roles by giving them new responsibilities, and allowing them to take risks, fail, and build upon their experience.
- They ventured into exciting new territory with creative community projects and learned how to design and navigate innovative partnerships with artists and culture bearers. In many cases this meant setting aside their expertise and established practices and going along with approaches generated by partners that were unconventional in community development, bringing new emotion, creativity, and diverse perspectives to the tasks.

- Several of the groups made specific and tangible commitments to maintaining their arts and culture focus through their strategic plans, their budgets and staffing, and their efforts to obtain new funding to continue this work are starting to bear fruit.

These are permanent shifts; none of the groups will be going back to how they operated before the CDI program period. Their experiences are also highly relevant for hundreds of peer organizations because the changes in values, leadership, and practice described here can be implemented by organizations whose forays into arts and culture begin on a more modest scale. Engagement with the arts and advancement of cultural assets and heritage can become part of the core identity of any community development organization, to the benefit of the places and people in whose interests they work.

Staff and youth coaches of Zuni Youth Enrichment Project visit the Cheyenne River Youth Project in Eagle Butte, South Dakota, in a learning exchange coordinated by ArtPlace. (*Lyz Crane/ArtPlace America*)



## Notes

- 1 The participating organizations were aware that their organizational evolution was going to be a focus of the research, and their reflections and feedback on this growth and change were solicited frequently.
- 2 After four years, many of the key activities and projects have only recently been completed, thus the long-term outcomes of these investments for community members remain undetermined. The myriad artistic processes and projects were highly regarded and valued by their communities. The early social impacts, which have been tracked informally but thoroughly, suggest that overall the CDI activities contributed to significant levels of social cohesion, improved intergroup relations, more meaningful community engagement, and creative support for community organizing to build power. The initiative has also seen investment in a relatively modest number of large capital projects, given the size of the grants and the original emphasis and expectations for leveraging that type of activity. The year 2020 will be decisive for determining how the organizations sustain their commitment to arts and culture strategies.
- 3 The term “upstream factors” refers to the social, physical, economic, and cultural environments and influences that cause or exacerbate health problems or, conversely, provide protection and resilience. Upstream factors are usually linked to race, socioeconomic status, and other characteristics often correlated with inequality.
- 4 The technical assistance was provided by peers in other community development agencies and consultants who helped with mapping cultural assets and strategies for working with artists to promote strong civic practice. The Center for Performance and Civic Practice, the organization that worked most extensively with the six CDI organizations, says, “Civic Practice work refers to projects that bring artists, designers, culture makers, and heritage holders into collaboration and co-design with community partners and local residents around a community defined aspiration, challenge, or vision.” (<https://www.thecpcp.org/>) The leadership and staff of the lead organizations acknowledged the wide range of competencies that would be needed to accomplish this hybrid creative yet disciplined work. With the support of ArtPlace, they assessed their capacities near the outset and grew substantially over time.
- 5 A term used by the Center for Performance and Civic Practice. See the article by CPCP leaders in the journal issue devoted to lessons of the CDI initiative: Transforming Community Development through Arts and Culture: M. Rohd, R. Martinez, S. Nankani, S. Sawicki and S. Scrofano, “Creating Process for Change” in *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Volume 14, Issue 2, November 2019.
- 6 Carol Gore quoted in “Leading Change: Reflections from Chief Executives of CDI Organizations” in *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Volume 14, Issue 2, November 2019. See also the four other chapters in the section on “Organizational Transformation” in the same issue of *Community Development Innovation Review*, including Victor Rubin, “How Organizations Evolve When Community Development Embraces Arts and Culture.”
- 7 Tyler Robinson in session moderated by the author at the National Planning Conference, American Planning Association, San Francisco, April 14, 2019.
- 8 Ashley Hanson in dialogue with the author in session at CDI R&D convening, Los Angeles, February 21, 2019.
- 9 Rick Goodemann quoted by Ashley Hanson in “Dialogue on Organizational Growth and Change” in *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Volume 14, Issue 2, November 2019.
- 10 Chelsea Alger quoted in “Dialogue on Organizational Growth and Change” in *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Volume 14, Issue 2, November 2019.
- 11 Grant Sunoo in dialogue with Lorrie Chang of PolicyLink in session at CDI R&D convening, Los Angeles, February 21, 2019.
- 12 Matt Eldridge, Kimberly Burrowes, and Patrick Spauster, *How to Invest in Park Equity Using Park Funding Decisions to Bridge Equity Gaps*, 2019, Urban Institute and City Parks Alliance. Victor Rubin, “Making Progress Toward Park Equity.” May 2019, PolicyLink blog, accessed at <https://www.policylink.org/blog/parks-equity>.
- 13 FPC had entered into several engagements with local residents for improvements to certain city parks prior to the CDI period. See a description of some of this previous work at <https://myphillypark.org/what-we-do/capital-projects/hunting-park/>.
- 14 Jamie Gauthier, interview with author, June 28, 2018.
- 15 Adela Park in dialogue with Alexis Stephens of PolicyLink in session at CDI R&D convening, Los Angeles, February 21, 2019.
- 16 See various chapters in Thomas LaVeist, Editor, *Race, Ethnicity and Health: A Public Health Reader*, 2002, Jossey-Bass, San Francisco; Judith Bell and Mary Lee, *Why Place and Race Matter: Impacting Health Through a Focus on Race and Place*, 2011, PolicyLink and the California Endowment; Meredith Minkler, editor, *Community Organizing and Community Building for Health and Welfare*, Third Edition, 2012, Rutgers University Press.
- 17 Tom Faber in dialogue with Lorrie Chang of PolicyLink in session at CDI R&D convening, Los Angeles, February 21, 2019.
- 18 Their process is described in more detail in the brief by Alexis Stephens (May 2019), *Working with Artists to Deepen Impact* (<https://www.policylink.org/resources-tools/working-with-artists>), and the forthcoming brief on strengthening community social fabric.
- 19 For a discussion on collective trauma as a key public health issue that can be addressed through the intersection of arts and community development, see J. Sonke et al, *Creating Healthy Communities through Cross-Sector Collaboration*, University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine/ArtPlace America, September 2019.

- 20 Joseph Claunch in “Dialogue on Organizing and Strengthening Social Fabric” in *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Volume 14, Issue 2, November 2019.
- 21 Primus Wheeler, interview with author, June 27, 2018.
- 22 Mahalia Wright, in dialogue with the author in session at CDI R&D convening, Los Angeles, February 21, 2019.
- 23 These competencies were first observed and compiled by Lyz Crane, deputy director of ArtPlace and the CDI program director, who will author the forthcoming brief.
- 24 The leaders of the CDI activities held organizational titles including Director of Planning (LTSC); Senior Director, Strategy and Planning (FPC); Director, Public and Resident Relations (CIHA); Chief of Staff (JMMF); Director of Development (SWMHP); and Co-Director (ZYEP).
- 25 Erica Reed in “Dialogue on Organizational Growth and Change” in *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Volume 14, Issue 2, November 2019.
- 26 Mahalia Wright in “Dialogue on Organizational Growth and Change” in *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Volume 14, Issue 2, November 2019.
- 27 A prominent expression of the importance of diversity and inclusion in the service of cultural equity can be found in the Statement on Cultural Equity released by Americans for the Arts in 2016: [https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/about/cultural\\_equity/ARTS\\_CulturalEquity\\_updated.pdf](https://www.americansforthearts.org/sites/default/files/pdf/2016/about/cultural_equity/ARTS_CulturalEquity_updated.pdf).
- 28 Gauthier resigned from FPC to run for office, won the Democratic primary for a city council seat in Philadelphia in May 2019 and the general election in November.
- 29 M. Tervalon and J. Murray-García, “Cultural Humility versus Cultural Competence: A Critical Distinction in Defining Physician Training Outcomes in Multicultural Education,” *Journal of Health Care for the Poor and Underserved*, 9 (2): 117–125, 1998.
- 30 Ellen Ryan in “Dialogue on Working with Artists” in *Community Development Innovation Review*, Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, Volume 14, Issue 2, November 2019.
- 31 City of Philadelphia, “Nonprofit Partners” webpage, accessed February 24, 2020, <https://www.phila.gov/programs/rebuild/our-team/nonprofit-partners/>.
- 32 significant developments, *Cultural Production: Creative Capacity and Strategic Planning*, report to the Jackson Medical Mall Foundation, December 2017.
- 33 Alexis Stephens, *Working with Artists to Deepen Impact*, PolicyLink, 2019.

## Acknowledgments

This research was made possible through the generous support of ArtPlace America. We want to especially thank Lyz Crane, Deputy Director, and Jamie Hand, Director of Research Strategies, for their invaluable guidance throughout this process.

Our deep gratitude goes to the staff of the six participating organizations of the Community Development Investments program, their artist collaborators, and community partners who contributed their experiences and reflections to this research. We would also like to thank Lynn Osgood, Executive Director of Civic Arts in Austin; Rebecca Cordes Chan, Program Officer, National Economic Development & Creative Placemaking Program of the Local Initiative Support Corporation; and Anand Subramanian, Managing Director at PolicyLink, who shared their thorough review and insightful feedback on this document.

The PolicyLink team for this project included Victor Rubin, Milly Hawk Daniel, Jeremy Liu, Alexis Stephens, Lorrie Chang, Adam Dyer, Kasandra Kachakji, and Nisha Balaram. Heather Tamir, Kakuna Kerina, and Jacob Goolkasian supported the production and design of this report. We would also like to express our appreciation to the local correspondents who contributed so much information and insight throughout our research process: Michele Lee Anderson, Karen Black, Jilly Canizares, Susan Carter, Meghan Holtan, and Charles Husband, and to our creative documentation artist-in-residence, Chris Johnson. Every effort has been made to accurately record and reflect the perspectives and experiences of the participants. The analysis and conclusions are the responsibility of PolicyLink.

**Main cover photo:** Cook Inlet Housing Authority.

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

PolicyLink is a national research and action institute advancing racial and economic equity by **Lifting Up What Works®**.  
[www.policylink.org](http://www.policylink.org)

## Author Biography

**Victor Rubin** is a Senior Fellow at PolicyLink. He leads the research about ArtPlace America's Community Development Investments and other explorations of place-based arts and cultural strategies. He has advised the American Planning Association, the American Institute of Architects, and many other organizations on social equity. Victor joined PolicyLink in 2000 after serving as Director of the HUD Office of University Partnerships. He was Adjunct Associate Professor in the Department of City and Regional Planning at the University of California, Berkeley, where he earned his MCP and PhD.



**Lifting Up What Works®**

**Headquarters**

1438 Webster Street  
Suite 303  
Oakland, CA 94612  
t 510 663-2333  
f 510 663-9684

**Washington, DC**

1301 K Street, NW  
Suite 300 W-414  
Washington, DC 20005

**Communications**

75 Broad Street  
Suite 701  
New York, NY 10004  
t 212 629-9570

**[policylink.org](http://policylink.org)**

Facebook: /PolicyLink

Twitter: @policylink