

# Case Study In Creative Placemaking: Brookland-Edgewood

## Executive Summary



*The Dance Place Step Team performs on the house stage. Donna Kearney, a young staff member from the neighborhood who started taking classes at Dance Place as a child, conceived of and leads this award-winning group. Dance Place responded to and grew with neighborhood needs by adding the Step Team to its repertoire.*

Intentionally embedding arts and culture into the economic resurgence of a Washington, D.C. neighborhood helped protect its cultural identity, bridge social differences and elevate the voice of residents, giving them a part in shaping the character and direction of development, even as new businesses and neighbors settle there. In Brookland-Edgewood, cross-sector partnerships brought together artists, residents, developers and planners as collaborators. This case study illustrates how Creative Placemaking — the deliberate integration of arts and culture into community development — can be a critical catalyst in forming equitable solutions for all social, economic and racial constituencies of a neighborhood.

## STAKEHOLDERS

### Multi-actor collaboration guiding equitable change

A forward-thinking government agency, a visionary nonprofit, a private developer, and the existing residents of a disinvested neighborhood worked together to protect the community's character while they shaped its progress:

**1— The District of Columbia Office of Planning (DCOP)** explicitly integrated Creative Placemaking into its redevelopment plans for the neighborhood (2008). Creative Placemaking is a good fit for the charter of this technical government agency: to create long-term plans and then work with local partners to realize those plans.

**2— Dance Place**, a dance-centered community nonprofit has practiced an implicit form of Creative Placemaking in Brookland-Edgewood for 30 years, using cultural enrichment to bring residents together. Dance Place also creates forums for newcomers to work with existing residents and businesses. By the end of 2016, Dance Place will open the Arts Park, a shared, outdoor creative space, designed through democratic community engagement.

**3— Bozzuto Development, Inc.**, a for-profit real estate developer, built and manages the new Monroe Street Market, a mixed-use development of residential, retail, performance, event, and studio spaces at the Brookland/CUA Metro station.

**4— Brookland-Edgewood Residents** are a diverse community physically separated into distinct halves, east (Brookland) and west (Edgewood) of the Metropolitan Branch rail line. Residents are actively involved in neighborhood development and political issues through the Advisory Neighborhood Commission. Artists lived and worked here well before the recent development.

The Kresge Foundation provided funding for DCOP and Dance Place. The Foundation's unique niche in the Creative Placemaking field is to focus on improving opportunity for low-income residents in American cities.

## CROSS-SECTOR

### A partnership linking strategists to artists on the ground

Over eight years, Dance Place and DCOP developed an informal partnership marrying local community development to long-term urban planning strategies. During this partnership, Dance Place produced engaging events built upon a rich web of established neighborhood relationships. DCOP integrated the needs of arts and culture into planning priorities and made Dance Place visible to national funders. By working together, DCOP and Dance Place brokered positive conversations between the local community and developers.

### Showing private sector partners a return on arts investment

Both DCOP and Dance Place persuaded Bozzuto to engage the community and support the arts. DCOP negotiated Bozzuto funding for amenities and benefits to bolster the neighborhood's arts and culture assets, including the creation of performance and event spaces and an additional 27 artist studios. With its "Art on 8th" public performances and activities, Dance Place convinced Bozzuto of the commercial value of enlivening newly-built spaces with the arts. Bozzuto now contributes financially to Art on 8th and markets its development as part of "an established, dynamic neighborhood, rich in history and immersed in art."

## IMPACTS

### Delivering transformative engagement through art as a process

Dance Place helps make community projects deeply engaging. Beyond contributing technical skills to planning, performances and programs, its collaborative mindset reframes potentially divisive community meetings into inclusive and participatory workshops and activities. Bozzuto and DCOP now see artists as collaborators and leaders, not just producers of objects and performances. Engagement is difficult to measure. A challenge remains for Brookland-Edgewood Creative Placemakers to move beyond anecdotal descriptions of engagement to more systematic surveys of resident opinion.

### Seeing and nourishing the human potential of existing residents

Through its education, camp, and internship programs, Dance Place has touched the lives of thousands of Brookland-Edgewood kids, helping them recognize their own abilities, widen their horizons, and, for some, open careers. Where outsiders might see neighborhood teens as unruly and threatening, Dance Place leadership and staff see restless energy, hunger for encouragement, and real potential to lead productive lives. Key Dance Place staff hail from the neighborhood. They grew up in Dance Place programs, joined the staff, and then created new Dance Place programs themselves. Dance Place has earned deep respect in the neighborhood by repeatedly helping to reveal the potential of its residents.

## THE CREATIVE PLACEMAKING FIELD

### Learning from cases

While integrating arts and culture into community development has been going on informally for a long time, Creative Placemaking as an organized discipline is only about six years old. In this nascent phase, there is a strong need among Creative Placemaking practitioners to connect and learn from each other. Though the community development challenges and creative assets in any given situation may seem completely unique, detailed case studies can reveal forces operating in similar ways across cases. For example, a key dynamic emerges in Brookland-Edgewood: a locally-grounded arts nonprofit and a long term planning agency leveraged the arts to engage a diverse group of local stakeholders. The Brookland-Edgewood case shows that community development without arts and culture, creativity, and design is incomplete.

*Dance Place convinced Bozzuto and DCOP to see artists as collaborators, not just performers.*