

Case Study In Creative Placemaking: Collinwood

Executive Summary



In a post-industrial neighborhood of Cleveland, the intentional integration of arts and culture into comprehensive community development helped reverse local population decline, rebuild a central commercial corridor around arts businesses, and restore a positive identity to the neighborhood. A community development corporation brought together residents, local artists, arts-oriented businesses, an arts intermediary, and city government agencies to execute a stream of community projects. This case study illustrates how Creative Placemaking—the deliberate integration of arts and culture into community development—can be a critical catalyst in forming locally-driven solutions to neighborhood needs.

STAKEHOLDERS

Seeing local artists as assets

A dynamic community development corporation (CDC), a visionary arts intermediary, a collection of city agencies, and Collinwood residents and artists worked together to recapture and nurture optimism about the neighborhood's future:

1— Northeast Shores Development Corporation, a CDC operating in North Collinwood since 1995, grew beyond its real estate focus to mobilize the arts as a transformative engagement tool. Northeast Shores involved local artists in development because it saw them as powerful resources for community building.

A cluster of arts businesses has sprung up on Waterloo Road in North Collinwood due to Northeast Shores Development Corporation's focus on incorporating local arts and culture into their community actions and on property ownership by artists.

2— Community Partnership for Arts and Culture (CPAC), a nonprofit, strategic intermediary supports arts organizations in Cleveland through capacity building, research, and policy development. CPAC's interest in community development is just one in a series of "creative intersections" where it has studied how arts and culture contribute creative solutions to civic issues.

3— City and County Agencies were key sources of financing and other resources. They include a City Council member, the City Planning Commission, the Storefront Renovation Program, and the Cuyahoga Land Bank.

4— Collinwood Residents and Resident Artists are a prodigious source of creative ideas, passion, and energy for addressing community issues. For resident artists and creative business owners, the arts are a natural source of talent to aid community development.

The Kresge Foundation provided funding for CPAC and Northeast Shores. The Foundation's chosen niche in the Creative Placemaking field is to focus on improving opportunity for low-income residents in American cities.

PARTNERSHIP

How research focused an action-oriented CDC

The relationship between CPAC and Northeast Shores began with CPAC's "Putting Artists on the Map" project, which identified an unexpected concentration of artists in North Collinwood. CPAC and Northeast Shores would later collaborate on the "Artists in Residence" program, a 3-year burst of projects combining CPAC's philosophy of using the arts to help solve social problems, with Northeast Shore's readiness to try new approaches. Both organizations shared a desire to experiment—CPAC wanted to systematically test techniques that might work across the region. Northeast Shores aimed to uncover new ways to affect vacancy rates and community engagement by trial and error in Collinwood. Influenced by CPAC's emphasis on research, Northeast Shores inventoried creative resources in Collinwood, and surveyed resident opinions about their community. This information gave Northeast Shores a factual basis for expanding existing home ownership programs and adding new programs that placed artists at the center of community engagement efforts.

IMPACTS

Small artist-led projects uncovering what works

Northeast Shores' "Small Project Support" program gives artists creative freedom to propose inventive projects to both engage Collinwood residents and address important community topics like building vacancy, teen engagement, and public health. Northeast Shores has evolved its approach over five iterations in as many years, moving toward greater transparency and control by residents. In the most

recent initiative, the "Ballot Box" project, resident voting allocated \$120K of funds to nine projects with topics like 'youth interning as community arts ambassadors', 'co-creation with residents of arts installations beautifying vacant spaces', and 'an ice cream truck fitted with recording equipment documenting community events'. Small grants of less than \$10,000 allow Northeast Shores to fund many artists and try a wide range of different ideas

Transforming community participation

The creative, fun, and lively resident engagement achieved by Northeast Shores dramatically contrasts with the conventional approach of most CDCs. With the help of artists and designers, meetings become participatory events or craft activities, and dry information becomes attractive, digestible, and localized. By continually asking 'how can artists make this work better?', Northeast Shores has transformed the way residents interact with development experts.

Creative use of capital reduces barriers to ownership

Northeast Shores gives artists, residents, and new businesses a stake in the success of the neighborhood by making property ownership affordable. Their lease-to-purchase model has helped creative businesses like Azure Stained Glass and BRICK Ceramic + Design build capital for down payments. It has also helped launch a stable core of local creative businesses. Renters may build equity by contributing their time to community activities. Northeast Shores offers low-cost, refurbishable homes that attract DIY-oriented artists to the neighborhood. Artist ownership fulfills two functions: it bolsters the

Home ownership motivates artists to focus their creativity on community issues.

visible critical mass of the creative community, and motivates artists to focus their creativity on community issues. These programs also transform artists' general perception of Cleveland as a place where they can achieve their dreams earlier than peers choosing New York or Los Angeles. So far, Northeast Shores programs have focused heavily on one category of residents—the artists. They plan to increase their level of engagement with residents of all types.

THE CREATIVE PLACEMAKING FIELD

Learning from cases

Collinwood is a showcase for Creative Placemaking. Six years after Northeast Shores began incorporating arts and culture into its approach, community development there is more dynamic and representative of residents' aspirations. CPAC catalyzed Northeast Shores' focus on the arts in several ways, including sharing staff and mentoring around research methods. In addition to successful collaboration across levels and sectors, this case offers instructive examples of innovative programs. Northeast Shores included artists in their community development, both as a new audience for property ownership assistance and as a new kind of collaborator in community engagement. By attracting new artist residents and their businesses, and creating artist-led community projects, Northeast Shores demonstrates the benefits of integrating arts and culture into a comprehensive development approach.