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Contact:
Hugh McDiarmid:
hcmdiarmid@kresge.org 248.660.4300

Case studies: Art, culture and community-engaged design help invigorate neighborhoods in Cleveland, Washington D.C.

*Pair of reports show how Creative Placemaking can be catalyst for
equitable, community-driven development*

The integration of arts, culture, and community-engaged design into community development has injected new life into post-industrial neighborhoods in Cleveland, Ohio and Washington, D.C. – and those successes are chronicled in depth in a [pair of case studies and companion videos](#) released today by The Kresge Foundation and Point Forward.

The studies describe how key stakeholders – residents, nonprofits, developers, and local government – worked together to help invigorate neighborhoods using local creative assets as drivers of positive change.

The results are compelling examples of Creative Placemaking – the integration of arts, culture and resident-engaged design into community development. The process has helped the neighborhoods address systemic barriers facing low-income residents, and been a bulwark against the displacement that sometimes occurs when rising property values in rebounding neighborhoods price out longtime residents.

“These case studies illustrate how diverse stakeholders in two cities have included Creative Placemaking in a suite of solutions to foster equitable, community development that reflects the authentic characters and histories of urban neighborhoods,” said Regina R. Smith, managing director of Kresge’s Arts & Culture Program.

Lessons from the case studies can help planners, citizens and developers embrace policies and practices that foster equitable and sustained development in cities across the U.S.

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The case studies:

- **Cleveland’s North Collinwood neighborhood**, where a community development corporation (Northeast Shores) worked with a local arts intermediary (Community Partnership for Arts and Culture – CPAC) to inject arts and culture into comprehensive community development with residents, merchants, local artists, and nonprofits. The collaboration recognized and incorporated indigenous cultural assets; integrated artists into the community through property ownership; and initiated small, artist-led community projects. These activities and others helped reverse population decline, rebuild a central commercial corridor including arts businesses and restored positive identity to the neighborhood.

Placing local creative assets at the center of the community development activities in North Collinwood, Northeast Shores and CPAC partnered with local artists and residents in a deliberate process to stabilize the neighborhood. That included financing mechanisms to help artists buy a home or building for their business, filling neighborhood vacancies and building a local creative economy. It also included a myriad of efforts to engage the community in local decision-making using nontraditional engagement tools. Those included supplementing “informational meeting” formats with arts-based activities for families where input and feedback was gathered in non-intimidating ways.

- **Washington, D.C.’s Brookland-Edgewood neighborhood**, where a multi-sector network of partners included a government agency (District of Columbia Office of Planning), a longtime neighborhood nonprofit (Dance Place), a developer (Bozzuto Development Inc.) and local residents. The collaboration helped welcome new businesses and residents while preserving the culture and authenticity valued by longtime residents.

The Brookland-Edgewood case study illustrates how the D.C. Planning Office’s deliberate attention to the importance of arts and culture in its local policies helped leverage cultural amenities funded by developer Bozzuto in exchange for zoning amendments needed for construction of new retail spaces and residential housing. In addition, the cooperative relationship between Bozzuto and the nonprofit Dance Place helped engage the community and create a project embraced by both newcomers and longtime residents. For example, Dance Place hosted an “art exhibition-style” presentation of the developer’s plans, using the Dance Place personnel as trusted liaisons between a wary neighborhood and the developers. Additionally, other stakeholders – like Artspace Projects, the Minneapolis-based nonprofit arts developer that built artist live/work spaces in Brookland-Edgewood – were key contributors to the stabilization activities in the neighborhood.

Both case studies highlight four essential components in the Creative Placemaking projects: urban planning, residents and merchants, community development, and the arts.

“Arts, culture and design aren’t the salvation of these neighborhoods, but they are critical catalysts in creating development solutions that incorporate all the social, economic and racial constituents of the communities,” said Griff Coleman, a principal at Point Forward. “Neighborhoods thrive when developers

work with local needs, customs and histories, instead of squeezing them out as has happened in many other places across the country.”

The case studies were commissioned by The Kresge Foundation’s Arts & Culture program to help illuminate creative approaches to community development that influence the built environment, enhance civic engagement, give residents a sense of agency and contribute to authentic narratives of place.

For more information on Kresge’s Creative Placemaking work, visit the Foundation’s [Arts & Culture Program page](#).

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