

Intersecting the Arts and Community Development:
A Report on the Enabling Environment of Creative Placemaking in New Jersey
For Building a Safer and More Vibrant State



Introduction

In January of 2020 the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey (HCDNNJ)¹ partnered with the National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (NACEDA) as a part of a national effort for the purpose of creating a state-level assessment for the enabling environment regarding creative placemaking, and its role in advancing equity. This assessment is reflected in this report with an analysis of statewide policy and support, in addition to public and private funding sources, training support structures, and more. In addition to the assessment and its components are a series of recommendations for advancing creative placemaking that have come from The Networks findings.

The Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey is a statewide association of over 250 non-profit housing and community development corporations, individuals, professional organizations, and prominent New Jersey corporations. These are all entities that support the creation of housing choices and economic opportunities for primarily low- and moderate-income residents. In our mission to Build a Thriving New Jersey the number and variety of our members stands as one of our greatest strengths.

The Network and its members share a commitment to promoting economic justice and the empowerment of low-income individuals and communities, and encouraging wider participation in the framing and implementation of public policies. We support our CDC members by providing targeted technical assistance and educational programs, pursuing additional resources and improved public policies, and conducting research on ways to enhance the impact and effectiveness of the community development sector.

Acknowledgments:

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¹ Subsequently referred to as “The Network” for the duration of this report.

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What Is Creative Placemaking

Creative placemaking is the intersection of local artists, community development corporations, municipalities residents, and more into traditional neighborhood revitalization work. Through creative placemaking the arts are integrated into concepts such as land-use, economic development, safety, transportation, and other community silos traditionally not thought of as relying on the arts. However, creative placemaking also reflects a much needed change in direction when it comes to how the arts are thought of and implemented across any given municipality, by prioritizing locally lead efforts whose results feed-back directly into the community.

Through creative placemaking the capacity of both the arts and an areas residency have the potential to be expanded into areas typically not considered. The usage of creative placemaking is an act that allows work involving the arts and community development to enhance each other in a new and exciting way. It is The Networks hope that this report can help to further awareness on the enabling environment of creative placemaking in New Jersey, while providing strategies and recommendations that can aid its fellow NACEDA members in discovering new and unique ways to further fund and incorporate the arts into community development.

The History of Art-Based Community Development and Creative Placemaking in New Jersey



The use of creative placemaking by name has been a fairly recent addition to the vocabulary of many artists, community developers, and financial entities, with the term becoming common in New Jersey at the beginning of the 2010s. However, placemaking, the use of the arts, and resident-focused work is something that community developers within New Jersey have been practicing for decades, if not longer. Additionally, New Jersey has experienced the healing power of community arts statewide following times of great hardship, with the aftermath of Superstorm Sandy and the long struggle to recover from the killing of George Floyd being examples in which the arts have played a role in expressing emotion or serving as a healing tool.

Through programs such as the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit (NRTC – developed in-part by the Network in 2002), Neighborhood Empowerment & Safety Training (NEST – an expansion of the CPTED program to include the arts and community building as part of the process), and more, the Network and its members continue to strive to break down typical mentalities surrounding the use of the arts in community development. Traditionally, concepts such as decorative board ups and art for the sake of art were strategies that were most prominent within the minds of CDCs. However, the introduction of creative placemaking has created new dialogues on the many potential uses of the arts within community development towards goals such as resident empowerment, economic development and community safety being the most prominent.

While in some circles creative placemaking or similarly minded models have faced some difficulty in being recognized for the benefits that they bring, there is overall a steadily increasing recognition that the arts can be used as a tool for fostering a greater quality of life within communities. Through community developments use of the arts as a vehicle to bring all aspects of a community together and to provide a platform for resident leadership exists the potential to highlight the arts as more of a means to an end than an isolated effort. With recognition of the past and current successes of the community arts, in addition to a growing public desire for them – creative placemaking is in a position to become one of the most vital tools in continuing to Build a Thriving New Jersey.

Statewide Government Support and Enabling for Creative Placemaking

Within New Jersey the most effective of creative placemaking contributions by the state government are in the form of policy that aid individual municipalities in leveraging local funds for community arts projects. Outside of policy the state government in recent years has created a series of small scale community art projects that embody many of the principles of creative placemaking, and have successfully involved and represented the targeted communities. However, many of these projects do not collaborate with community developers to the greatest extent possible, if at all, creating a smaller impact than could be achieved. A consistent trend that reflects this is the state government's proven ability to leverage funds consistently and during exceptional times, with creative placemaking often taking place in targeted locations, but not community- or state-wide.

Local Taxes and Revenue Sources

The potential for various municipalities across New Jersey to adopt unique funding sources for community arts is a strategy that is seeing increased traction within the past five years. While the tax or source of funding is one that may vary based on the community, the possibility for a statewide initiative to encourage the brainstorming and the replication of various models across the state has valuable potential. A series of local models built into a network or standardized framework can become a statewide system in effect.

Case Examples:

Hoboken, New Jersey – [Arts Bond Ordinance](#)

Through an executive order signed by Mayor Ravi S. Bhalla in 2018, the City of Hoboken has created a local framework for the creation of public and community art through a provision dedicating 1% of all city bond ordinances for the funding of those efforts. In the city of approximately 53,000 residents it is estimated that the ordinance annually creates anywhere from \$200,000 to a quarter of a million dollars for use on community and public arts.

The leveraging of these funds has already allowed for community art projects to be funded such as the Hoboken Art Box Project. During the summer of 2020 15 locally based artists were awarded grants by the city's Arts Advisory Committee for the purpose of creating community art reflecting equity and inclusion on the many electrical boxes that lined the city. This was done in coordination with a separate project by the Hoboken Business Alliance that made use of ten other electrical boxes as canvases for local history lessons regarding the city. The collaboration of both projects resulted in the use of typically unattractive fixtures within a community as canvases for promoting unity, while also respecting and retelling the history of the local area.



Atlantic City, New Jersey – [Casino Tax Revenue](#)



In individual instances the casinos of Atlantic City have had tax revenue collected from them diverted for the purposes of city-wide art campaigns. These instances have often been conducted to make use of large amounts of vacant land created as a result of economic hardships or natural disasters. A notable use of such funds was in 2013, during which a 12 million dollar package of casino tax revenue was committed to a city-wide art initiative called “Artlantic.”

“Artlantic” saw the creation of “Art-Parks” utilizing vacant lots, with the desire that such installations would boost local tourism, and reduce neighborhood blight through the creation of new community spaces. The strategy through which “Artlantic” was funded was sound in practice and execution. However, unutilized opportunities in its implementation meant that its results were temporary.

Despite having millions of dollars in resources behind it the “Artlantic” art project serves as a textbook warning surrounding the creation and delivery of community art. The centerpiece project of “Artlantic” was a pirate-ship themed “art-park” created from a vacant lot called Wonder Park. Wonder Park itself cost approximately 3 million dollars and was headed by an internationally known curator from Manhattan named Lance Fung. Unfortunately a lack of public engagement and community-lead planning played an instrumental part in the parks closure, which occurred less than five years after its creation. Public attendance of the park was

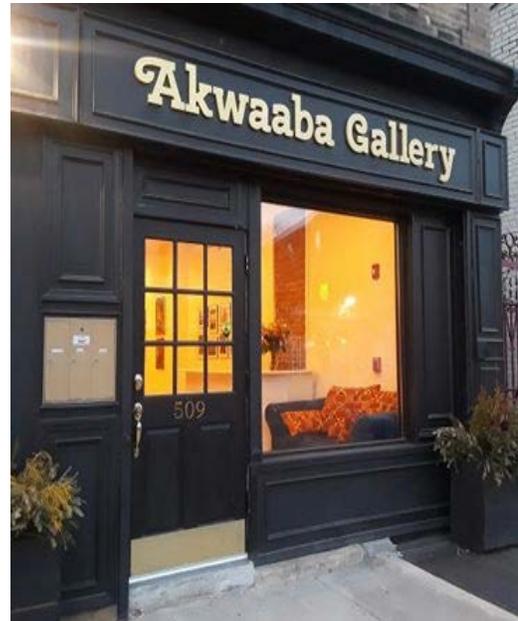
so low that the then mayor of Atlantic City Don Guardian spoke of concerts held within the park by stating that the bands often outnumbered the residents and attendees.²

As of the creation of this report Wonder Park has been demolished into a parking lot, with its major components sent to California, leaving the area devoid of art once again. Wonder Park serves as a key example of how a community arts project can possess a sound funding structure, but be undone by the manner in which it is delivered.

Newark, New Jersey – [Creative Catalyst Fund](#)

The Creative Catalyst Fund has been one of the City of Newark’s tools used to alleviate the hardships faced by the local arts community due to the impact of Covid-19.³ As a larger part of the city’s ten year community cultural plan established in 2018, the Creative Catalyst Fund is a community-minded funding package for local artists, art-based non-profits, and other cultural institutions. The CCF has, from the ground-up, been a process that embodies the values of creative placemaking, with an extensive public engagement process ranging from surveys of local artists, over ten open community forums, and multiple stakeholder meetings laying the foundation for its direction. While not a statewide framework, the model used in Newark should serve as an example for how other large municipalities across a state can adopt a strategic plan that advocates for and funds creative placemaking.

To date the Creative Catalyst Fund has been used to aid in the continued operations and expansion of various local artists and their community galleries during the Covid-19 pandemic by awarding grants for day-to-day costs to community art and cultural institutions whose annual costs are up to two million dollars. A notable example is the [Akwaaba Gallery](#), which was opened in 2019 as a community art gallery hosting diverse works of art that seek to eliminate cultural boundaries and promote narratives surrounding equity and inclusion. A variety of works are placed in exhibitions with over nine being created in 2019 alone, and a variety of community artist forums supplementing them. Artists displaying their art in Akwaaba Gallery are able to sell their works



² https://pressofatlanticcity.com/news/atlantic-citys-old-wonder-art-park-moving-to-california/article_4e343c65-1248-54ff-923e-24785b5c1354.html

³ <https://www.newarknj.gov/news/mayor-baraka-announces-creative-catalyst-fund-grants-to-artists-and-arts-organizations-impacted-by-covid-19>

from the venue itself – creating a sustainable platform that displays local arts while financially supporting the artists who have made them.



One of many electrical boxes painted as a part of the Hoboken Art Box Project



“Wonder Park” – The centerpiece project of Artlantic.



Another series of electrical boxes in Hoboken reflecting the local history of the community.



Partial interior view of Akwaaba Gallery during an exhibit event.

Local Taxes and Revenue Sources Strengths

Local bonds, taxes, and ordinances are often most successfully utilized on small municipal scales for the purpose of economic revitalization. While not a statewide framework the potential for these practices to be replicated across various municipalities with the source of funding being specific to the area exists. The application of enough of these models across different municipalities or on a county-wide level could eventually result in a statewide model in practice. Larger municipalities such as cities can often serve as more significant examples for the rest of the state to follow. Some key-points regarding local taxes and revenue sources strengths as opposed to getting statewide program funding are:

- Local funding sources for community arts and creative placemaking face significantly less difficulties in getting passed.
- Locally created initiatives can allow for a greater level of resident involvement and creative placemaking to be practiced.
- Models created on local levels can be easily adapted and replicated across a state or county.
- Local creative placemaking through bonds and ordinances can serve as pilot-programs for the county or state to replicate at a later date.
- Local art projects can have a personal feel to them, by expressing the ethnic, racial, historical, etc. face of the individual community providing a feeling of ownership and pride.

Local Taxes and Revenue Sources Areas of Opportunity –

Many local forms of taxes are rarely built to be a consistent source of revenue and are often in effect for the purpose of initiating a specific project or program. This issue can be compounded in low-income communities in which maintaining a steady source of revenue from an already economically distressed taxpayer pool can be difficult at best. Some key-points regarding the areas of opportunity with local taxes and revenue sources are:

- Low income communities may face difficulties in creating self-sustained funding sources for community arts.
- The source from which funding is drawn may have to vary across different municipalities or may be exclusive to the area in question (I.E. Casinos).
- Poor sustainability (as seen with “Artlantic”) can result in creative placemaking and the community arts being seen as wasteful to the local municipality.
- A widespread advocacy campaign may be required to educate individual municipalities or counties on the potential of funding creative placemaking.

Statewide Funding and Enabling Environment

Arts and Culture Trust Funds Bill

Following two years of lobbying by the Jersey City Arts Council and Jersey City Mayor Steven Fulop, The Murphy Administration in December of 2019 signed into law a bill allowing the creation of new local funding streams through municipal referendums for community-based artists and the CDCs that partner with them. This bill was created for the purpose of providing the various municipalities of New Jersey with the capacity to create a funding pool for local community art, in order to revitalize certain aspects of a neighborhood, highlighting areas such as its culture and the local economy. The condition that these funding pools be created through a local referendum also creates flexibility for the municipalities, in order to determine what source of funding they propose to their taxpayers. To date Jersey City is the first and only large municipality to pass a referendum through the use of this bill, although other municipalities are expected to follow suit.

(Read more about the bill [here](#))

Case Example:

Jersey City Arts and Culture Trust Fund –

Summary:

Following the signing of the statewide Arts and Culture Trust Fund Bill by Governor Murphy in 2019, the City of Jersey City proposed the creation of their own trust fund through a public referendum during November of 2020.⁴ The Jersey City Arts and Culture Trust Fund was proposed as a fund for art-based non-profits and individual artists that would levy up to 2 cents per 100 USD of assessed property value for homes within Jersey City. Through the November referendum the proposed Jersey City Arts and Culture Trust Fund passed, with 64% of residents voting for it.

Key Points:

- The Jersey City Trust Fund’s creation was due to the passing of a statewide bill allowing for its proposal.
- The Arts Fund Committee of the Jersey City Arts Council created public polls to ensure that public opinion of the Trust Fund was favorable when it was proposed.
- The Jersey City Trust Fund passed a public referendum by a wide margin despite current economic hardships faced by residents (due to the pandemic).

⁴ <https://jerseycitynj.gov/news/mayornj1startsculturetrustfundgenerate1manually>

- The Trust Fund is estimated to collect approximately 1 million dollars annually for grants that will be distributed to art-based community developers and individual artists.
- Continuous public meetings have been built into the planning process in order to ensure that local residents can steer the funds into categories and projects of their choosing.⁵

Arts and Culture Trust Fund Bill Strengths

The Arts and Culture Trust Fund bill has a series of strengths that are likely to aid it in having the greatest impact possible. The bill is highly flexible due to it allowing individual municipalities to create their own trust funds through referendums. By not imposing a preplanned framework with a specified funding source, the state government has created an enabling environment for creative placemaking projects without imposing a direct model that may not work in all communities. Some of the key strengths gathered from the Arts and Trust Fund Bill are:

- Statewide bills creating a platform for creative placemaking trust funds within individual municipalities are much easier to advocate for than a piece of legislation that creates a statewide system.
- Municipal-based creative placemaking trust funds allow for a variety of funding sources to be proposed via referendum that enhances the possibility of the measure being desired by the residency.
- Passing of Arts and Culture Trust Funds through public referendums creates a foundation of creative placemaking through resident-driven actions.
- Statewide policy encouraging locally funded systems allows for the residency to take a more involved position in deciding how the funds are used and for what projects.
- Arts and Culture Trust Funds are a community-driven and invested method for acquiring a sustainable flow of resources for creative placemaking.

Arts and Culture Trust Fund Areas of Opportunity

For Jersey City and the municipalities that will create these trust funds in the future the process is still largely experimental. Some areas of opportunity surrounding arts and culture trust funds are:

- The standardization of a system that promotes diversity and inclusion and the recipients of funds can serve as a promotion tool for the use of a similar program in other municipalities⁶

⁵ <https://artpridenj.org/blog/passing-jersey-city-arts-and-culture-trust-fund>

⁶ <https://www.newjerseystage.com/articles/2020/11/19/jersey-city-voted-to-support-the-arts-now-what/>

- Proper representation from the community within the planning and use of an arts and culture trust fund can be a powerful tool for the purposes of racial equity and representation
- The first municipalities making use of arts and culture trust funds can serve as examples to their neighbors across the state, becoming the architect and mentor of a standardized system
- Local CDCs within larger networks will be able to partner with their fellow community developers to maximize potential impacts through the trust funds



Jersey City has had a rich history involving the use of community arts for a number of purposes.

Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credits

Created in 2002 by the Network and administered through the state Department of Community Affairs, The Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit stands as one of the most successful public-private programs in furthering funding for community development efforts across New Jersey. By offering a 100% tax credit with a 1 million dollar limit per neighborhood the NRTC has leveraged tens of millions of dollars in funds since its inception and has served as the catalyst for multiple affordable housing and community development projects. Many of these projects have facilitated the joining of the arts and community development as the centerpiece of their work.

In order to receive NRTC funds, neighborhood-based nonprofit organizations must have a DCA-approved revitalization plan for the neighborhood it serves. Nonprofit entities must use at least 60% of the tax credit funds for housing and economic development. The remaining balance may be used for complementary activities, such as the provision of assistance to small businesses, removing barriers to self-sufficiency, and promoting the integration of mixed-income neighborhoods.

Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credits covered in more detail in Section 4

Hotel-Motel / Occupancy Taxes

Many states use occupancy taxes or fees as a means of collecting funds for the arts, with some having the community arts and creative placemaking listed by name. New Jersey currently holds its state occupancy tax at 5% for the majority of occupancy-based businesses, and as low as 1% in municipalities that see high amounts of tourism and visitors. Under the current structure of the tax approximately 23% of the revenue collected is allocated to the State Council on the Arts, with a minimal annual appropriation of 16 million dollars. However, as of 2021 proposals have been made in the form of new legislation⁷ to allocate approximately 57% of the funds collected from occupancy taxes to the state Council on the Arts, with the remaining percentage being allocated into departments related to culture, history, and tourism.

The proposal to increase the amount of funding to the State Council on the Arts would serve as an increased funding source for creative placemaking projects, which the Council has supported in the past. Examples of direct support can be seen in programs such as the [Campaign for Coastal New Jersey](#), in which artists and community-based organizations in coastal towns are granted funds to create art within spaces that can be used to communicate the environmental

⁷ <https://www.billtrack50.com/BillDetail/1244668>

risks associated with coastal flooding.⁸ These spaces also double as community meeting areas that can be used for events promoting discussions around environmental issues specific to the area. The State Council on the Arts has also expressed a renewed desire in supporting community-based arts through various acts such as increased articles, speaking presentations, and the attendance of conference panels.⁹

Currently the state Council on the Arts is in an excellent position to increase its levels of collaboration with New Jersey's community developers in order to further promote the increased usage of creative placemaking, and to partner with CDCs for the purpose of creating a statewide creative placemaking program. Local and statewide CDCs have repeatedly shown themselves to be a reliable and essential partner to the successful creative placemaking projects conducted by the state Council on the Arts. Greater public-private cooperation can allow for increased capacity in programs such as the Networks upcoming Community Building Arts Project, which seeks to educate all sectors of a residency and municipality on forming collaborative creative placemaking-based plans that improve quality of life factors (walkability, safety, cohesion, etc.)

Key Points:

- New Jersey possesses an occupancy tax infrastructure that has been successfully used to fund state-run art programs such as the New Jersey State Council on the Arts, which in turn has awarded grants to various entities utilizing the arts (I.E. municipalities, CDCs, schools, and universities).
- The New Jersey State Council on the Arts has shown an increasing interest in creative placemaking, and has provided repeated funding for community-based art projects.
- The New Jersey State Council on the Arts has also expressed its desire to increase its levels of promotion regarding community-based art.
- The current occupancy fee framework focuses largely on tourism and historic preservation outside of its funds allocated to the Council on the Arts.
- Current proposals exist in the state assembly to increase the amount allocated to the arts up to 100%.

⁸ <https://nasaa-arts.org/newsletter/2020-nasaa-notes-issues/december-2020-nasaa-notes/new-jersey-using-the-arts-to-communicate-about-coastal-flooding/>

⁹ https://www.nj.gov/state/njsca/dos_njsca_grants-community-arts.html

Hotel-Motel / Occupancy Taxes Strengths

New Jersey has proven strengths regarding the framework of its occupancy taxes, and in the primary recipients of them in regards to creative placemaking. Some of these are:

- Occupancy fees are an established tax that has served as a funding source for the Council on the Arts, which has expressed interest in promoting creative placemaking
- These taxes often create a high amount of revenue on average due to the large tourism industry in the state
- In a state that has very high property taxes, transient occupancy taxes are a source of revenue that do not impact our residents in a negative manner
- These taxes are used to support the arts, but have not traditionally been used to support a collaborative effort with CDCs to support creative placemaking

Hotel / Motel Occupancy Taxes Areas of Opportunity

The current state entities receiving tax dollars for projects involving the arts have opportunities to expand their involvement with local CDCs and in the creation of additional creative placemaking projects. Major opportunities are:

- The identifying and listing of creative placemaking by name in the grants and programs created through occupancy fees by the State Council on the Arts.
- Advocacy and legislative support of bills seeking to increase the amount of occupancy fee revenue given to the State Council on the Arts.
- Increased collaboration with local and statewide CDCs on educating municipalities on benefits of creative placemaking, and in creating community frameworks to enact creative placemaking projects.

Other State Managed Systems and Support

The state government supports community arts in other forms beyond taxes and revenue generation. Some examples of these programs and forms of support include:

NJ Transit Transitional Art –

A program initially run in 2019 for a year that was jointly run by NJ Transit and the NJ State Council on the Arts for the purpose of displaying locally created art within and around New Jersey's various transportation hubs. One of the major focuses of the program was to highlight the diverse number of cultures that New Jersey's residents bring to the state, with paintings, traditional dances, and other performances being some of the forms of art featured.

Examples:

[Inaugural art project at Newark Penn Station](#)

[Traditional Chinese dances performed at Newark Penn Station](#)

[Local artwork displayed at stations in Atlantic City](#)



Local Art in State Buildings –

Various departments of the state government serve as “defacto” art galleries showing the rich expanse of showcasing local art in and around these public buildings. State entities such as the Department of Health, the Department of the Treasury, and the Economic Development Authority have either utilized art moved from existing community structures such as transportation hubs, or have actively sought out artists to create and display original works in collaboration with the State Council on the Arts. The works of art that the state government has expressed interest in include wall murals, streetscapes, sculptures and more. The desire of the state government to include local and historic community-based works of art within their various buildings reflects a growing interest in representing the communities where they are located and the diversity of our state.

Examples:

[NJ Department of the Treasury call for artwork article](#)

[Article highlighting works of art placed in the Department of Health building in Trenton](#)

NJ State Council on the Arts Creative Placemaking Resources –

In addition to its established work on community-based art projects the State Council on the Arts has expressed its interest in advancing creative placemaking through its promotion of non-profit entities that are currently or typically involved in work that pertains to community-focused art. The State Council on the Arts has also publically stated its continued interest in both spreading knowledge on community-based art, and providing grants for projects utilizing them. Notable recent grants have included the mentioned contributions to the Campaign for Coastal New Jersey, the Southern Orange Performing Arts Center, and to Rutgers University-Camden for continued work with the community through “art gardens.”

[NJ State Council on the Arts Resources for Community Revitalization](#)

[NJ State Council on the Arts Priorities](#)

[Campaign for Coastal New Jersey](#)

[Camden Arts Gardens](#)



A Camden Art Garden in the form of a community space created out of an unused area between buildings that was created in-part through funds from the New Jersey State Council on the Arts

Areas of Opportunity Section Overview

From the case examples given across the state government sections an overall assessment can be made of the areas of opportunity regarding the current enabling environment. Currently, practices involving creative placemaking on a state and municipal level would benefit the most from either maximizing any existing usages of these principles, or in utilizing them as soon as possible. Usages of these principles possess the potential to expand current creative placemaking work and policy beyond its current silos, associate new outcomes with the usage of community arts (safety, economic development, etc.), and to empower the residents of the many municipalities within our state.

Joining Public and Community Art –

Despite Local and statewide municipalities having a variety of models for generating revenue for the arts at their disposal, there still exists a barrier between the creation of public and community art. This barrier can often be seen through the creation and installation of art in communities that misses vital opportunities to gather public participation and input. In the case of “Artlantic” and its Wonder Park centerpiece, this resulted in the creation and failure of an art-based public space that saw little to no attraction from a community that did not feel represented by the project, nor did it draw tourists to the area, which would have brought in revenue to the community. To avoid mistakes such as those made during the “Artlantic” project and others like it, a shift in how local, county, and state municipalities think of merging community art with public art (or public property) must be achieved.

Avoiding Top-Down Delivery –

A consistent theme in many of the shortcomings of community art projects managed on a state level or through a municipal body is the direction in which the project is managed. The issues faced by initiatives like “Artlantic” have highlighted the need for projects funded and managed from the state or municipal level to fully incorporate the principles of creative placemaking. Most important of these principles is the ground-up direction which both community development and creative placemaking utilize in their work. Many community art projects that fail to become semi-permanent fixtures of an area often lack a sense of ownership and investment from the residents of the community. The state government has shown a growing awareness of the need for a resident-lead direction in the community art projects that it invests in. This can be seen through its recent creation of the Arts and Culture Trust Fund Bill, or in the further endorsement of creative placemaking and community art projects on a municipal level, and as part of the state funded public building projects that incorporate the arts.

Expanding Existing Resources

As it stands, the state has a modest amount of direct resources or funds for creative placemaking. Specific state entities such as the Council on the Arts and the Economic Development Authority have shown a growing willingness to fund small scale individual projects involving creative placemaking, but little in the way of statewide systems or programs. However, the state government has also made steps to increase the capacity for individual municipalities to create their own systems that can fund creative placemaking projects. These measures allow for municipalities who can leverage the funds to create their own systems for community art that will be coordinated through their own local residents.

Section Review

- State government contributions to the enabling environment of creative placemaking lies primarily in policy that removes barriers for individual municipalities to fund and practice it.
- State affordable housing agencies do not currently support creative placemaking by name or in large scale community art programs.
- Despite expanding the capacity for municipalities to practice creative placemaking through trust funds, no solid framework exists for building these trust funds, showing a need for clear guidelines and directions surrounding their potential structure.
- The state does have smaller projects that fund and practice creative placemaking in specific target locations (I.E. NJ Transit stations, Department of the Treasury, and Department of Health).

State funded community art projects have had a past history of being top-down in their delivery, and missing vital opportunities for creative placemaking with community input and involvement.

- CDCs and private funders have created the majority of funds for projects related to creative placemaking through systems such as the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit projects.
- New Jersey possesses tax frameworks such as occupancy fees that are used to partially fund the arts, but have room for expansion.

Recommendations

- Encouragement of state arts departments to create cross-silo dialogue regarding creative placemaking with other departments such as those related to housing and urban planning.
- Advocacy and support for legislation seeking to redirect additional tax revenue or state/federal dollars to departments or programs that could benefit the community arts and community development partnership, such as increasing occupancy fee revenue to the state arts council and allocating additional funds to the Economic Development Authority for cultural grants.
- Promotion of successful trust fund frameworks to other municipalities in order to standardize and further expand creative placemaking processes throughout the state at-large (I.E. Conference panels, workshops, etc.).
- CDC collaboration with departments of state government conducting small-scale creative placemaking projects in order to expand the areas targeted (I.E. A train station and the immediate neighborhood surrounding it) and to create plans that address safety, representation, and other qualities of life.
- Continued advocacy for the benefits of creative placemaking to state government in order to avoid the traditional pitfalls of state-run community art projects.
- Advocacy for increased commitment to matching private resources dedicated to creative placemaking or to programs that have the potential to facilitate it (I.E. NRTC).

CDCs, Creative Placemaking, and Racial Equity

Within New Jersey the majority of work surrounding creative placemaking is conducted by a combination of community development corporations and private financial institutions such as banks or philanthropic foundations.

The Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program (NRTC)

The Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Program (NRTC) is a critical part of New Jersey's community development landscape. Designed by the Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey, the NRTC offers business entities that invest in eligible low- and moderate- income neighborhoods a 100% tax credit against various New Jersey state taxes. To receive NRTC funds, nonprofit organizations must have a DCA-approved neighborhood revitalization plan for the area it serves and must use at least 60% of funds for affordable housing and economic development.¹⁰ Program details can be found on the [NJDCA Website](#).

Through its nearly two decades of existence, the NRTC has funded numerous creative placemaking projects. These projects have significantly contributed to the artistic, safety, and economic development of neighborhoods such as Orange, Camden, Asbury Park, and East Trenton, among others.

Below are two case studies of NRTC-funded projects that successfully incorporated creative placemaking into their community development projects. More examples of NRTC-funded projects can be found in the Network's [2012 NRTC Report](#), [2014 supplement to the 2012 Report](#), and [2017 NRTC Report](#) (all on www.hcdnnj.org/nrtc)

¹⁰ <https://www.hcdnnj.org/nrtc>

Case Example:

Organizations: **Unity Square Partnership**

Project: **Unity Square Community Center – New Brunswick**



Unity Square Partnership transformed a decommissioned firehouse into a Community Center

Summary: Officially opened in June 2014, the Unity Square Community Center is a partnership with the City of New Brunswick that transformed a historic, decommissioned fire house into a thriving community center. The community center hosts over 200 events and activities each year, including ESL classes; STEM-focused youth programs; community meetings; and social and cultural events. Nearly \$1 million of funding through NRTC helped make the project possible.

The Unity Square neighborhood has about 6,000 residents, most of whom are lower-income Spanish-speaking immigrants from the Mexican state of Oaxaca. Unity Square leverages its NRTC funding to support housing and commercial development of the city, civic participation, immigrant and tenant rights, and public safety.¹¹

Funders: City of New Brunswick tax dollars; NRTC grant provided through tax credit from Johnson & Johnson.

¹¹ <https://www.mycentraljersey.com/story/news/local/middlesex-county/2014/06/16/new-unity-square-community-center-aims-empower/10638353/>

Key Points:

- Unity Square Community Center in New Brunswick hosts over 200 events and activities each year, making it the cultural, social, and educational center of the neighborhood.
- The Community Center was created from a converted decommissioned fire house and provides a space for Unity Square’s immigrant community to gather together.

Case Example:

Organizations: **Housing and Neighborhood Development Services (HANDS), Inc.**

Project: **Hat City Lofts – Valley Arts District, Orange**

Summary: Completed in 2018, Hat City Lofts is part of HANDS’ overall revitalization of the Valley Arts District, a former industrial neighborhood that spans sections of Orange and West Orange. Using NRTC funding, HANDS repurposed a former abandoned hat factory into a mix of loft condominiums and arts-related commercial space. Hat City Lofts is celebrated as the cornerstone for Orange’s arts community.¹²



The Berg historic hat factory before and after HANDS transformed it into Hat City Lofts.

Funders: NRTC; HUD Economic Development Initiative Special Grant; NeighborWorks America; NJHMFA; Community Housing Capital; New Jersey Community Capital.

In addition to Hat City Lofts, HANDS also restored a 1980s-era local watering hole into Hat City Kitchen, a neighborhood bar, restaurant, and destination music venue at the center of the Valley Arts District.¹³ Since its creation in 2010, Hat City Kitchen has been a communal gathering hub for food and music in the City of Orange, and was rated “Best New Restaurant” in 2010 by New Jersey Monthly Critic’s Choice.

¹² <https://handsinc.org/portfolio/hat-city-lofts/>

¹³ <https://handsinc.org/portfolio/re-dev-proj-2/>

Not only does Hat City Kitchen serve as a community hub, but it also reinvests all revenue into the community. “Every dollar Hat City Kitchen makes will help fund art shows, music festivals, or beautification in the Valley,” reported [NJ.com](#). In addition to providing a venue for Essex County’s local musicians to showcase their work, Hat City Kitchen provides employment opportunities for cooks and wait staff, contributing to economic as well as cultural revitalization of the neighborhood.

Key Points:

- Hat City Lofts, developed by HANDS, Inc., repurposed an abandoned hat factory into 32 loft condominiums and 10 commercial arts and studio spaces.
- This project represented the completion of HANDS’ commitment to create 100 long-term affordable arts spaces as part of a plan to reinvent a former industrial neighborhood driven by a creative economy.
- HANDS also restored an old restaurant into Hat City Kitchen, a neighborhood bar and live music venue that serves as a main cultural hub of the City of Orange while reinvesting all revenue into the Valley Arts District.

Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit Strengths

- Since its inception in 2002, the NRTC has been an extremely popular and effective program that enables relationship-building across public and private sectors. As it stands the NRTC annually provides a total of approximately \$12 million to community developers, with \$3.1 for Covid-19 relief and \$2 million for planning grants in 2020.
- The requirement that any project be the result of a robust community planning process ensures their impacts are truly beneficial to the neighborhoods where they are based.
- By providing a sustainable funding source, the NRTC gives creative placemaking projects a strong foundation that enables them to grow, improve, and expand over time.

Areas of Opportunity –

- Currently, the DCA provides a total of \$12 million per year in tax credits. Demand for NRTC funding, however, far exceeds available credit. Consequently, private investment into creative placemaking initiatives is restricted, as investors with limited funding often prioritize housing and economic revitalization over arts-based projects. This gap between supply and demand reflects that there is much room for the NRTC program to grow, specifically regarding its creative placemaking potential.
- The NRTC, as it is used now, is primarily focused on housing and economic development without direct mention of how creative placemaking can contribute to this goal. While some nonprofit entities do use creative placemaking techniques in their neighborhood plans, it is not yet a central or required component of the NRTC program.

- Creative placemaking has incredible potential to improve community safety. For example, projects such as decorative board ups, painted crosswalks, and murals serve to transform previously dangerous areas into safer, more cared-for community spaces (see the section on Neighborhood Empowerment & Safety Training for more detail). However, this potential is not explicitly recognized by the NRTC program.
- Because creative placemaking is not yet a central facet of the NRTC, the fact that public arts projects can *simultaneously* enhance community safety and revitalize economies still is not widely incorporated into projects by investors and community developers.

Recommendations –

- To unite the use of the arts with the NRTC’s goals of neighborhood revitalization, creative placemaking should be made a central component in the NRTC program. This can be done by working with the DCA to develop an updated program giving additional points toward projects that include creative placemaking elements.
- Additionally, to catalyze investment in creative placemaking, continued increases in overall funding would provide greater investments in underserved communities and offer a safer environment.
- To further emphasize the role of creative placemaking in neighborhood revitalization, the imagined barriers that separate creative placemaking from the wider goals of community safety and economic development must be broken down. This can be accomplished through education initiatives (such as webinar series or information campaigns) that inform nonprofits, private investors, and government officials on the benefits of creative placemaking.
 - For example, the Network plans to start an Arts/CDC Steering Committee for local artists and community developers to engage in recurring conversations on how to incorporate the arts into community revitalization and safety initiatives. This Steering Committee is one way that CDCs can involve artists in the community development process while becoming more informed about the benefits of creative placemaking.

Funder Commitments and Priorities

Private investors are key funders for creative placemaking projects in New Jersey. As shown in the previous section on the NRTC, private investors have a demonstrated interest in utilizing the arts for community development.¹⁴ However, while private funders do play a major role in financing creative placemaking around the state, only a minority of projects funded through the NRTC contain creative placemaking elements, meaning there is significant potential for growth.

Currently, racial equity is not directly addressed by the NRTC. However, although there is still much room for growth in terms of prioritizing racial equity, the NRTC's community-based approach does incentivize private investors to fund projects that truly reflect communities' diverse populations and their needs. To be eligible for NRTC funding, Neighborhood Plans must include evidence that at least 50% of households in the neighborhood are of low and moderate-income (defined as less than 80% of area median income) and at least 25% are of low-income (defined as 50% or less of area median income.¹⁵ Due to our nation's history of structural racism regarding housing and wealth creation, Black, Native American, and Hispanic households are more likely than white households to be low income.¹⁶ The NRTC's prioritization of low and moderate-income neighborhoods therefore creates an opportunity for funders to invest in racially equitable projects.

Below are examples of foundations, CDFIs, banks, and corporations that have shown their commitment to funding creative placemaking projects in New Jersey.

Example:

Private Foundation: Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation

Summary: For nearly 40 years, the Dodge Foundation has supported the arts in urban and rural New Jersey communities. It has helped to fund projects such as arts councils, performing arts and music centers, gardens, arts education programs, and theaters in urban centers.

The Dodge Foundation recognizes that, due to current funding patterns in the culture sector, communities of color in New Jersey are left with little arts infrastructure and therefore struggle to sustain their work. In response, Dodge uses a "Creative Place-Keeping" model to support community-based organizations that authentically partner with arts organizations of color.¹⁷

The Dodge Foundation has a long history of and continues to be committed to using the arts for mental health recovery, especially through dance and poetry. The Dodge Poetry Program hosts

¹⁴ https://www.hcdnnj.org/assets/documents/nrtc_report_2017.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.nj.gov/dca/divisions/dhcr/offices/docs/nrtc/nrtccriteria.doc>

¹⁶ <https://nlihc.org/resource/racial-disparities-among-extremely-low-income-renters>

¹⁷ <https://www.grdodge.org/what-we-fund/arts/>

a biennial poetry festival, which has become the largest poetry event in North America.¹⁸ The Dodge Dance initiative funds a variety of dance companies and choreographers with the purpose of expanding people’s understanding of dance as a form of creative expression.

The Dodge Foundation also uses poetry and dance to assist in emotional recovery through crises. In 2012, for example, the Dodge Foundation helped fund DanceNJ Strong, a benefit concert for Sandy relief featuring fourteen individual dance performances.¹⁹ Rather than focusing on revenue from the performance, DanceNJ Strong aimed to raise the spirits of artists who wanted to do something to help in the hurricane recovery.



Gregory Orr and the Parkington Sisters perform “The Beloved” poetry and song cycle at the 2018 Dodge Poetry Festival

Key Points:

- For nearly 40 years, the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation has provided grants to community-based organizations for arts projects in urban and rural New Jersey communities.
- The Dodge Foundation uses a “Creative Place-Keeping” model to support communities and artists of color.
- Dodge uses the arts to enhance communities’ mental health, including through the Dodge Dance initiative.

¹⁸ <https://www.dodgepoetry.org/about-us/>

¹⁹ <https://blog.grdodge.org/2012/12/07/dancenj-strong-a-benefit-concert-for-sandy-relief-on-12-12-12/>

Example:

CDFI: New Jersey Community Capital

Summary: New Jersey Community Capital (NJCC) is a CDFI that provides financing to nonprofits for community development.²⁰ NJCC works with partners to create high-quality neighborhood plans that will help them qualify for the NRTC, Wells Fargo Regional Foundation funding, the Neighborhood Preservation Program, and similar neighborhood-based revitalization efforts.²¹

In 2016, NJCC established a Creative Placemaking Fund. This revolving loan fund is designed to enable place-based investments that integrate arts and culture into neighborhood revitalization projects in underserved communities. By 2019, it had approved 20 loans totaling \$9.6 million for creative placemaking projects including art galleries, independent theaters, and large mix-use developments throughout New Jersey.²²

Key Points:

- NJCC provides financing to nonprofits for community development initiatives.
- NJCC's Creative Placemaking Fund approves loans for arts-based projects in underserved communities across the state to integrate creative placemaking into neighborhood revitalization efforts.

Example:

Bank: Wells Fargo Bank

Summary: Wells Fargo Bank has used the NRTC to invest in various creative placemaking projects across the state.²³ The Network's 2012 NRTC report notes that various foundations, including the Wells Fargo Regional Foundation (WFRF), have contributed greatly to the success of NRTC recipients through funding and technical assistance.²⁴

These past contributions of WFRF demonstrate the ability of banks to build local relationships through the NRTC in a way that significantly benefits both the bank and NRTC recipients. Although creative placemaking was not a stated priority of Wells Fargo, projects previously supported by WFRF have contributed to arts-based community development throughout the state.

²⁰ <https://www.newjerseycommunitycapital.org/about-us/>

²¹ <https://www.newjerseycommunitycapital.org/programs-initiatives/current-programs/community-strategies/>

²² <https://www.grdodge.org/about-us/featured-news/announcing-125000-investment-in-new-jersey-community-capitals-creative-placemaking-fund/>

²³ <https://www.nj.gov/dca/services/2018grantawards.html>;

<https://www.newjerseycommunitycapital.org/2017/12/media-advisory-celebration-of-ribbon-cutting-at-615-north-clinton-avenue-trenton/>

²⁴ <https://www.hcdnnj.org/assets/documents/nrtc%20final%20report.pdf>

Key Points:

- Wells Fargo Bank used the NRTC to invest in creative placemaking projects across the state.
- Wells Fargo Regional Foundation greatly contributed to NRTC recipients' past success.
- Although creative placemaking was not a recognized priority of WFRF, the NRTC gives banks an opportunity to support arts-based community development projects.

Example:

Corporation: **Johnson & Johnson**

Summary: The NRTC provides a relatively simple way for corporations to get involved in arts-based neighborhood revitalization initiatives. Johnson & Johnson took advantage of this opportunity in 2014 when it provided an \$835,000 NRTC grant to the Unity Square neighborhood of New Brunswick to help create a community center for local arts, educational, and cultural activities.²⁵

Not only did Johnson & Johnson's investment contribute to the arts-based revitalization of the Unity Square neighborhood, but it also created a meaningful local relationship with the residents of New Brunswick, where its corporate offices are based.

Key Points:

- Johnson & Johnson invested \$835,000 in NRTC funding for the New Brunswick Unity Square Community Center in 2014.
- By investing in this creative placemaking initiative, Johnson & Johnson strengthened relationships with residents of New Brunswick where its corporate offices are based.

Funder Commitments and Priorities Takeaways:

Strengths –

- As shown by their large investments in NRTC projects, corporations, banks, CDFIs, and foundations in New Jersey are committed to arts-based community development.
- Private investors provide a significant amount of money to the community development sector every year, enabling arts-based projects to be sustainably funded.

²⁵ <https://www.hcdnnj.org/assets/documents/nrtc%20final%20report.pdf>

- Throughout the state, private investors' commitments to racial equity are becoming more widespread. The NRTC, by rooting projects in a community-based approach, helps ensure that neighborhood plans reflect their diverse populations.

Areas of Opportunity –

- Given that New Jersey is one of the most diverse yet also most racially segregated states in the nation, there is still a vast potential for racial equity initiatives to increase further.
- While banks such as Wells Fargo have actively invested in community development projects, creative placemaking is not at the forefront of these investments. If banks were to invest more reliably in creative placemaking projects, the foundation of creative placemaking in New Jersey could be greatly strengthened.
- Private funders are often hesitant to invest in creative placemaking simply because it is a relatively new concept that is not widely understood or promoted by the community development field. This creates a self-perpetuating cycle in which funders are hesitant to support creative placemaking because they are uncertain of its benefits, causing creative placemaking initiatives to be underfunded, which prevents creative placemakers from widely proving its benefits to funders, thus starting the cycle again.

Recommendations –

- Private investors can be further incentivized to center racial equity in their investments. This could be accomplished by establishing funding mechanisms that prioritize projects benefitting communities and artists of color, such as the Dodge Foundation's Creative Placekeeping model.
- To promote private investment in creative placemaking initiatives, investors could be more involved in the community development process. One way to encourage involvement is for CDCs or arts organizations to create steering committees, task forces, hold conferences, or initiate other similar programs that bring community developers, artists, and private investors into conversations with one another.
- To break the self-perpetuating cycle in which funders are hesitant to support creative placemaking initiatives, arts-based community developers must educate funders on the benefits of creative placemaking. If the concept is more widely understood, funders may be more willing to invest in these projects.

A second way to break this cycle is through economic incentives. For example, as stated in the previous NRTC section, the NRTC program could be updated to give additional points toward projects that include creative placemaking elements.

Merging Creative Placemaking and Traditional Systems

Neighborhood Empowerment & Safety Training - HCDNNJ

Neighborhood Empowerment and Safety Training (NEST) is one of the Network's latest efforts that advances the education and practice of creative placemaking in New Jersey.²⁶ With valued funding from TD Bank, NEST was created out of the recognition that traditional neighborhood safety and improvement programs such as Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) were too top-heavy in their design, focus, and implementation, while severely lacking a focus on the unique fabric of each community and how we can express the racial, ethnic, business, or historic nature through the arts. Through NEST the Network has sought to empower communities through resident lead assessment activities and planning sessions, with the use of the arts being a centerpiece throughout the process. Using NEST the Network seeks to promote the versatility of the arts as a tool for public safety, economic development, and other means that go beyond simple aesthetics.

Throughout the entirety of a NEST project the residents and stakeholders of the community being served are given guidance across its many steps. Network staff involved in the process give resident assessments and feedback the highest priority in forming their recommendations for an area, before carefully reviewing them during public forums to ensure that the resulting report is one that represents those who live and work in the community. By using the arts and creative placemaking as a part of NEST, specific strategies that incorporate the arts and have tangible effects on the local quality of life can be achieved.



NEST seeks to promote strategies that combine the usage of community art with topics such as resident safety.



Resident assessments of potentially unsafe areas in their community and collaborative planning activities are a core feature of NEST.

²⁶ <https://www.hcdnnj.org/nest>

Case Example:

New Brunswick – Esperanza Neighborhood Project

In late 2018 and early 2019 the Network undertook a NEST project in the Esperanza Neighborhood within the City of New Brunswick in collaboration with its members New Brunswick Tomorrow and CoLab Arts. The Esperanza Neighborhood during the Networks time working with it was facing concerns from the residents of public safety regarding crime, lack of lighting, speeding through their community, and other public factors. In addition to these factors was the decades-long demographic shift that was occurring within the community, with the local Hispanic residency becoming the majority over the traditionally German and Hungarian population.

Through NEST the Network and its local partners held a series of public forums, neighborhood assessments, and planning sessions in which the residents of the community prioritized the areas of opportunity within the neighborhood, and their desired solutions to them. Across the time spent within the community a desire for both traditional safety improvements and for more community-based involvement utilizing the arts were the most consistently noted goals by the residency. Following the creation of the full report and its recommendations New Brunswick Tomorrow and CoLab Arts made repeated usage of the arts for both tools for safety and community engagement.

A particular example of this was in the painting of a community mural on the side of a bar that had been the source of multiple violent crimes, and was connected to a building suspected to be used for various illegal activities. The location of the mural not only reflected the new and growing identity of the Hispanic community, but also served to draw more attention to the building in question and reduce the amount of crime taking place within and around it. Another example was the subsequent creation of a community mural containing symbolism from Hungarian and Hispanic cultures to serve as a platform for the difficult conversations that were occurring around the changing demographics of the Esperanza Neighborhood.



Esperanza Neighborhood mural containing a mixture of symbolism from Hungary and the Oaxaca region of Mexico.



Esperanza Neighborhood mural promoting Oaxacan culture and drawing attention to a location where safety was a concern.

Key Points:

- The Network conducted a NEST project with local partners in a community known for waves of immigration that was experiencing resident concerns over culture, safety, and quality of life.
- NEST was used to aid the residents in assessing their community and forming a strategic plan, which included the use of the arts to promote culture and safety.
- In coordination with the NEST project and after its conclusion local artists created artwork to draw attention to locations that were the source of issues, and to serve as a platform for discussions surrounding the community's changing demographics.

Neighborhood Empowerment & Safety Training Strengths

- NEST serves as an example of a successful redirection of a traditionally punitive program that has incorporated creative placemaking and community-driven art.
- The process through which NEST works is one that produces a resident-created roadmap for the locations and usage of community art within a local area.
- NEST promotes the usage of the arts as a means to an end and not simply an aesthetic created simply for the sake of it.
- Through a focus on the education and involvement of the residency a culture of empowerment is created.

Neighborhood Empowerment & Safety Training Areas of Opportunity

- Due to NEST being a creation of the Network the knowledge of it and its capabilities is largely specific to New Jersey, despite it being a system that can be utilized and replicated anywhere.

ArtSpace & SewingSpace – Homefront NJ

Homefront is a non-profit based out of Lawrenceville NJ that has taken an innovative approach to combining traditional mental health, job development, and family service programs with elements of creative placemaking in order to achieve truly unique results. Using a self-created art studio ArtSpace utilizes therapeutic art sessions in which clients are taught to paint in order to build self-confidence and tell their stories in an expressive and healing manner. Following the clients creation of various works of art they are given the opportunity to sell them at art galleries that are held by Homefront.

Alternatively, SewingSpace follows a similar model with a higher emphasis on job development and economic empowerment. Through SewingSpace, Homefront teaches its clients how to create items that are needed by the community at large such as pajamas, blankets, pillows, and

more. In addition to the creation of essential items are crafts such as Christmas tree skirts, wine-bags, and other decorations that are sold at community markets and galleries.

Both programs allow for valuable life skills to be learned, while also providing an outlet for those who faced trauma, poverty, or other significant hardships during their lives. The items created as a part of these programs has also found a perfect balance of the artistic and practical needs of the community. Homefront has successfully made use of a series of untapped skillsets within their clients that have created both economic training for them and a wave of new materials for the local arts scene that provides the clients with a sense of pride.



A painting studio created and used by Homefront for their ArtSpace program.



A sewing studio created and used by Homefront for their SewingSpace program.

Statewide Levers and Miscellaneous Creative Placemaking Initiatives

In addition to funding by the government, philanthropic, and financial sectors, there are various softer resources in New Jersey that enable communities to undertake equity-focused creative placemaking projects. These statewide levers—which include conferences, workshops, local arts programs, universities, museums, libraries, etc.— help fortify New Jersey’s creative placemaking landscape by directly engaging with the communities they serve.

Conferences and Workshops

Conferences and workshops can be used to connect leaders in the field and educate people on creative placemaking’s potential to revitalize communities. Virtual conferences and workshops are extremely accessible, presenting obvious opportunities for community developers to discuss creative placemaking as a tool for community development and partnership.

- Example: The **Housing and Community Development Network of New Jersey** hosts an annual **Under One Roof Conference** featuring concurrent workshops on community development. The conference emphasizes creative placemaking and local art as tools for community safety, revitalization, and economic development. Available to the Networks members, Under One Roof reaches hundreds of leaders in the field, including community developers, housing counselors, and government officials.²⁷

Coordinated Crisis Recovery Efforts

When Hurricane Sandy hit New Jersey in 2012, it devastated many coastal towns. Recognizing the role of the arts in healing and recovery, the community development, government, philanthropic, and financial sectors all worked together to rebuild communities using the arts as a tool for recovery.

- Example: **Monmouth Arts** in partnership with the New Jersey State Council on the Arts began **ArtHelps**, a program offering grants for arts initiatives in Monmouth County. Each year, the program supports more than 2,500 high-quality, low-cost exhibitions, concerts, performances, workshops, and arts festivals that serve over 700,000 children and adults.²⁸

Today, in the midst of a global pandemic, we have seen a similar coordinated response across sectors to support the arts in New Jersey. These collaborative efforts and quick mobilization of resources demonstrates New Jersey’s prioritization of the arts as a solution in times of crisis.

- Example: The **New Jersey Arts and Culture Recovery Fund (NJACRF)**, hosted by the **Princeton Area Community Foundation** and Co-Chaired by Jeremy Grunin of the Grunin Foundation and Sharnita C. Johnson of the Geraldine R. Dodge Foundation, was established in 2020 to ensure the survival and equitable recovery of the state’s arts, cultural, and historical sector during and after the COVID-19 pandemic. The first phase of the fund, which closed in January 2021, awarded \$2.6 million to 100 NJ-based nonprofits statewide.²⁹

Additionally, using the arts as a healing tool has major mental health benefits. During the pandemic, the arts help unite communities and mitigate the negative mental health impacts of isolation. Artistic expression also has mental health benefits for those who are ill.

²⁷ <https://www.hcdnnj.org/network-conference>

²⁸ <https://www.monmoutharts.org/arthelps>

²⁹ <https://www.newjerseycommunitycapital.org/2017/12/media-advisory-celebration-of-ribbon-cutting-at-615-north-clinton-avenue-trenton/>

- Example: The **Hackensack Meridian Health Wellness Center** uses art, dance, music, and imagery therapy to help patients with cancer express difficult emotions. These therapies reduce stress, fear, and anxiety surrounding illness.³⁰

Furthermore, our country is in the midst of an ongoing racial equity crisis. Creative placemaking initiatives that incorporate the arts, culture, and history help foster dialogue and unity around issues of social and racial injustice in a positive, productive way.³¹

Museums, Libraries, and Universities

Museums, libraries, and universities use their community-based influence to create educational programs that celebrate their communities' culture, history, and diversity through the arts. In doing so, communities are strengthened as more unified and welcoming places for all.

- Example: **Rutgers University** helped open the **New Brunswick Performing Arts Center** in 2019. The center aims to revitalize New Brunswick's downtown cultural arts district while providing professional opportunities for students at Mason Gross School of Arts.³²
- Example: **The Montclair Museum of Art** provides exhibitions, educational programs, and collections that engage and celebrate their diverse community.³³
- Example: The **Princeton Public Library**, in partnership with the Arts Council of Princeton and Mi Pueblo Lindo, hosts an annual **Latino Cultural Festival**. This event enables Princeton's large Central and South American community to come together in an afternoon of music, dance, food, and crafts.³⁴

Statewide Levers Takeaways:

Strengths –

- Statewide levers such as conferences, workshops, local arts programs, universities, museums, and libraries have used their networks and community-based influence to bring communities together through the arts.
- Organizations across sectors have mobilized quickly in times of crisis (such as Hurricane Sandy and the COVID-19 pandemic) to create funding sources and programs that enable hard-hit communities to heal and rebuild while expressing themselves through the arts.

³⁰ <http://wellnesscenter.hackensackmeridianhealth.com/Conditions/Cancer/85,p07338>

³¹ <https://www.nj.com/opinion/2020/12/we-need-to-ensure-the-survival-of-arts-and-culture-in-nj-despite-this-pandemic-opinion.html>

³² <https://www.rutgers.edu/news/rutgers-marks-grand-opening-new-brunswick-performing-arts-center>

³³ <https://www.montclairartmuseum.org/>

³⁴ <http://artscouncilofprinceton.org/events/festival-cultural-latino-mercado-on-the-plaza/>

- Healing through the arts has major mental health benefits, both for the artists and for consumers of art. Art initiatives have helped New Jersey communities mentally recover after Hurricane Sandy and during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Areas of Opportunity –

- Universities, museums, and libraries offer resources and services to the public, giving them unique positions of influence within their communities. While some entities take advantage of their community-based positions, this potential remains underutilized in many municipalities across the state.
- The fact that resources for the arts have been so quickly mobilized by these statewide levers in times of crisis proves that the mobilization of funding for the arts is both very necessary and very possible. The arts’ potential for healing, however, is often forgotten when crises comes to an end.
- While the arts have been used to address acute crises in New Jersey, ongoing crises—such as racial equity—do not receive the same prioritization. Statewide levers have the potential to use their capacity for arts-based resource mobilization to address ongoing crises.

Recommendations –

- Institutions such as universities, museums, and libraries should be encouraged to create more programs and events that celebrate their communities using the arts. This could include festivals, exhibits, research projects, educational series, and other initiatives that engage and unite their communities.
- Educate community members, local government officials, and philanthropic/financial sectors on the potential of the arts to heal and rebuild communities not only after crises, but at all times. Specifically, ongoing crises such as racial justice must be more highly prioritized by entities utilizing creative placemaking for healing and recovery.

Areas of Opportunity Section Overview

Across New Jersey, creative placemaking is beginning to take hold at local, regional, and state levels. But there is still much room for growth. Through the case studies analyzed in this report, we have identified several recurring patterns that reveal gaps in New Jersey’s creative placemaking landscape. These gaps, once addressed, represent Areas of Opportunity for future growth in the field of creative placemaking.

1. Expanding Vocabulary:

Because the greater concept of creative placemaking is still relatively new to the field of community development, vocabulary surrounding its purpose and benefits is not yet fully developed. There continues to be a false preconception that investors must choose between funding arts/cultural projects *or* housing, economic, and community safety projects. The reality that creative placemaking initiatives can address issues of housing, employment, safety, racial equity, and community beautification all at once is still not widely understood.

To advance the idea of creative placemaking as a tool for community safety and economic revitalization, language surrounding the unity of these issues must be developed and strengthened to widen our understanding of what is considered “the arts.”

By expanding this vocabulary, creative placemaking would have a stronger foundation in the field of community development. This would better enable funders, CDCs, and government officials to understand and articulate its benefits, helping creative placemaking to grow to its full potential in New Jersey.

2. Expanding Government Assistance:

In New Jersey, creative placemaking projects are primarily driven by CDCs that receive funding from private investors. Given the efforts of CDCs and municipalities to advance creative placemaking in their communities seen in our case studies, the efforts of the state government are comparatively lacking.

One of the main roadblocks regarding the use of creative placemaking is insufficient funding for projects. With increased government assistance, this roadblock could be overcome, as creative placemaking would have the necessary resources and infrastructure to grow to its full potential. This government assistance could be provided in the form of legislation that increases funding for arts-based development projects and programs such as the NRTC that incentivize coordinated creative placemaking efforts across sectors.

One way to increase government funding for creative placemaking is by expanding the NRTC. In 2008, the NRTC’s tax credit increased from 50% to 100% of every dollar invested.³⁵ In 2019, Governor Phil Murphy signed legislation to increase the tax credit allocation to \$15 million.³⁶ These increases demonstrate that the government has expanded the NRTC in the past, and it is possible to do so again. By increasing available NRTC funds, private investors and CDCs could initiate a wider diversity of community development projects. Rather than having to choose between housing and economic revitalization projects *or* creative placemaking projects, CDCs

³⁵ <https://www.hcdnnj.org/assets/documents/nrtc%20fact%20sheet%205%2030%2012.pdf>

³⁶ https://www.hcdnnj.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=1417:gov--murphy-signs-historic-investment---resources-for-affordable-homes---community-development&catid=30:policy-bulletin&Itemid=308

and private investors could engage in both, providing more comprehensive community development overall.

In addition to increased funding, the NJ state government could incentivize creative placemaking by providing additional points to NRTC-funded projects that include arts components, specifically those that use the arts to address safety issues. HANDS' Hat City Lofts and Hat City Kitchen, for example, are NRTC-funded projects combining government and private sector support to transform a previously abandoned area into a thriving community hub. Projects such as this have enormous potential to decrease crime rates both through economic revitalization and community unity. If the New Jersey state government increases funding toward creative placemaking initiatives, especially those with community safety components, more CDCs would be able to engage in these projects than is currently possible, and the state could see a substantial decrease in crime rates.

3. Merging Creative Placemaking with Traditional Systems

While an awareness of creative placemaking is growing within New Jersey the manner in which it should be conducted is a question that many community developers and arts-related groups face when introduced to the concept. The difficulty of creating a framework from scratch has exposed the potential to create uncertainty when trying to promote the use of creative placemaking to various non-profits and their funders. This can often be compounded if creative placemaking is a relatively new idea to a state that has yet to see tangible results from it, which can discourage funders.

In New Jersey many CDCs and non-profits that do promote or practice creative placemaking have had the best results when merging the tenets of the concept into their existing community development programs, such as in the case of NEST. Another example. This approach removes many of the difficulties associated with creating a new initiative, while also allowing funders to see a familiar program that has been upgraded with creative placemaking components. By merging creative placemaking with traditional community development programs a total integration of the two can be achieved at a much faster rate than through the forming of isolated creative placemaking programs.

Full Report Overview

Across the entirety of this report the state environment regarding the current capacity of creative placemaking and its areas of opportunity have been assessed through the use of prominent case examples and reoccurring trends. The findings of this report are summarized as such:

State Government Strengths

- New Jersey on a statewide and municipal level has shown that its revenue infrastructure has the ability to leverage funds for community art projects during times of crisis.
- New Jersey has a tax framework that partially funds the arts, with some of the state legislature expressing an interest in expanding its contributions significantly.
- The Department of Community Affairs administering the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit program has provided for community developers to conduct a number of creative placemaking projects.
- The State Council on the Arts recognizes creative placemaking as a valuable concept and has promoted private organizations that seek to advance it.
- The state has passed legislation that has allowed for municipalities to create their own art and culture trust funds for the purpose of local creative placemaking projects.
- Transportation departments of the state have embraced small scale creative placemaking projects within their transportation hubs.

State Government Areas of Opportunity

- Barriers still exist between various departments of the state government concerning the knowledge and practice of creative placemaking and its benefits.
- Community art projects administered by or created from the state have shown a top-down planning and implementation style, with valuable opportunities for resident empowerment not being utilized to their full potential.
- Currently the state provides very little in the way of direct resources for creative placemaking, the private sector of the state (CDCs, NGOs, and funders) doing the majority of the leveraging.
- Opportunities exist for the state to further increase funding to existing resources such as NRTC.

Private Sector Strengths

- The private sector (namely corporations, banks, CDFIs, and foundations) provides the primary source of funding for creative placemaking projects in New Jersey.
- As shown by their large investments in NRTC-funded projects, the private sector is committed to community development initiatives.
- This private sector investment through the NRTC helps to launch new creative placemaking projects and sustain existing projects.
- The private sector's commitment to racial equity is becoming more widespread as foundations and CDFIs begin prioritizing artists and communities of color in their investments.

Private Sector Areas of Opportunity

- Although the private sector does currently provide more funding for creative placemaking than any other sector, creative placemaking is still not a top priority of private sector investments as connected with community development projects.
- The private sector's hesitancy to prioritize creative placemaking is likely due to the belief that creative placemaking initiatives are *separate* from community safety and economic development initiatives.
- The private sector must be further educated on the benefits of creative placemaking.
 - A deeper understanding of these benefits would remove the illusion that the sector must choose between funding the arts *or* funding safety and economic initiatives—in reality, creative placemaking addresses all of these issues simultaneously.
- Given New Jersey is one of the most racially diverse yet most racially segregated states in the nation, there is still a vast potential for racial equity initiatives to increase further.
 - State government, community development organizations, and the private sector can and should work together to create funding mechanisms that prioritize communities and artists of color within creative placemaking initiatives.

Conclusion and Looking Forward

It is the Networks hope that this report has aided NACEDA members and its associates in better understanding the landscape of creative placemaking within New Jersey, and can help form a greater perspective of the position of creative placemaking on a national level. The many organizations that make up the Network have long held a belief that the arts are integral to a community's success and its ability to grow. This belief is held across the wide variety of our members including health services, financial institutions, community developers, and many more.

In correlation with our continued trust in the ability of the arts and creative placemaking, is the growing recognition of the need for community-lead arts that extends all the way from the residential level up to the highest positions of state government. Following the hardships faced by our country during 2020, the Network believes that community developers and artists alike are in a unique position at this period in time where the capacity of the arts to heal, revitalize, and uplift our many neighborhoods is not only becoming increasingly appreciated, but desired and needed as well. Going forward the Network plans to continue to promote the benefits of creative placemaking through a variety of mediums. These methods will take the form of continued advocacy for the incorporation of the arts into community development, and the promotion of the benefits of joining the two through our educational tools, creation of our multi-sector steering committee, and promoting the success of existing partnerships.

The continued advocacy for community-based art and creative placemaking to our legislature will remain a priority in both our day-to-day operations and during our larger statewide advocacy events such as Legislative Day in conjunction with our statewide Arts partners. The promotion of successful creative placemaking models within New Jersey on our website and at conferences, such as Under 1 Roof, will serve as a platform to highlight the numerous benefits regarding the use of creative placemaking. In addition to the continued use of creative placemaking within NEST, the Network also plans to create a joint Artist-CDC steering committee for the purposes of expanding the known uses of creative placemaking and their benefits to community beautification, health and safety. The steering committee will serve to grow relationships between artists, community developers, and their municipalities, while also providing art-based strategies with tangible effects on an areas quality of life. Finally, requests for additions to existing statewide programs such as the Neighborhood Revitalization Tax Credit to include rewards or incentives for the use of creative placemaking will be incorporated into our legislative and program training and messaging.

Introspectively, the Network will use the findings gathered during the creation of this report as an internal roadmap to continue its work in advancing the use of creative placemaking and community arts as vehicles for promoting resident empowerment, racial equity, neighborhood safety, and more.

