



Arts and Community Development Programs Overview

“Without community there is no liberation.” Aude Lorde

How did we get here today?

In an attempt to keep step with the innovation and daring of its member organizations, in 2014 PACDC launched an expansive project to help understand how communities and the neighborhoods that make up these communities build cohesion and permanence in the face of change, and how artists might help/play a role in strengthening this effort. The Third Space Initiative was conceived as a demonstration and technical assistance program that supports activation of vacant, abandoned or simply under-utilized space through art and design to serve as a locus for community interaction and engagement.

Third Space is that physical location that is not work or home but that serves as a focal point of community interaction and shared neighborhood identity.

Armed with a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts, we set out to initiate in-neighborhood demonstration projects across four sites in the service areas of our member organizations, plan and convene at least one major convening on the issue of placemaking at the neighborhood level, and expand practitioner knowledge and efficacy in conducting similar work in their own communities by establishing a creative placemaking tool-kit featuring actionable and realistic best in practice methods to arts-based strategies to community development.

Our first Third Space program, entitled ***The Shack Exchange***, launched in August 2016 in partnership with People’s Emergency Center CDC in West Philadelphia. Nestled on a lot at the corner of 41st and Lancaster Avenue, Keir Johnson and Ernel Martinez, artists from Amber Arts and Design, conducted a pop up arts space that enlivened the lot with friendly and engaging conversation and lively performances of poetry and storytelling along-side healthy beverage tips. The program was implemented in part through youth serving as program ambassadors sharing information and building personal connections to passersby. The six-week program and the resultant project feedback was featured at the National Consortium of Creative Placemaking’s 2016 Creative Placemaking Knowledge Exchange Forum at Rutgers University in Newark, NJ.



The second installation of Third Space wrapped up in June 2017 with community outreach, fact finding and engagement with theater artist and ethnographer Maria Moller working with New Kensington CDC around their Orinoka Civic House development. Their project entitled ***Tell Me Something Good***, helped uncover the story of the challenges and hope surrounding the neighborhood in which the development was built as a way to bring together both established and newer residents and businesses.



The subsequent Third Space collaboration was in partnership with the Philadelphia Museum of Art (PMA) and their **Philadelphia Assembled** commission of Dutch social practice artist Jeanne van Heeswijk that included in neighborhood installations, a range of community events and culmination with the current installation and exhibition at PMA's Perelman Building. PACDC's participation in this project is through Sovereignty: Economic Sovereignty on 52nd Street in collaboration with West Philadelphia organizations, and Reconstructions: Blueprint for a Just Neighborhood in the South Kensington neighborhood in collaboration with our member Women's Community Revitalization Project.

Learning from this work we realized quickly that while these efforts and their results are encouraging, they were not for the most part sustainable after the artists and PACDC's resources went away.

How do you build this work to last?

We don't have the full answer yet, but we took what we learned from Third Space and tried to explore more ways to prime the pump for communities to have the tools and knowledge they need to take ownership in and drive the process from the ground up.

Toward that end, we partnered with JustAct and Lisa Jo Epstein to develop and implement **ArtPowered Places: A Grassroots Creative Placemaking Program** designed to serve the community engagement arms (i.e. Neighborhood Advisory Committees) of five PACDC members (Asociación Puertorriqueños en Marcha, Brewerytown Sharswood CDC, HACE, Mt. Vernon Manor CDC, and Southwest CDC) to: 1) help identify and build strong networks with artists and local organizers living and/or working in the targeted CDC neighborhoods; 2) build implementation capacity through trainings and technical assistance to better empower artists in these neighborhoods to work more effectively with community developers to address issues impacting neighborhoods in which they live; and 3) build a more precise understanding on the part of CDCs and NACs of the value and effectiveness of strategic, resident-driven arts-based engagement in neighborhood development. ArtPowered Places is funded by a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts through the National Alliance of Community Economic Development Associations (NACEDA).



Results and insights of this work are being documented through: 1) multi-method evaluation plan to assess the social outcomes of the project—led by Mary Beth Semerod, and to understand the civic efficacy of Just Act and PACDC's collaborative training activities in growing knowledge of and capacity for equitable arts-based civic engagement and creative placemaking in CDCs; and 2) as part of PACDC's forthcoming on-line creative placemaking tool-kit.

We look forward to sharing the results of this work as it unfolds.