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Artist Space Development: Making the Case

Maria Rosario Jackson and
Florence Kabwasa-Green
The Urban Institute
NASAA, 2008



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Findings about Space for Artists from Investing in Creativity Report:

- Space related funding is focused on arts presenting institutions rather than artists-focused organizations or individual artists.
- For arts funders affordable space is not articulated as central to artists needs compared to grants and financial support, etc.
- With few exceptions, there is little capacity within the arts sector to deal with artists space development.



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Making the Case for Artist Space Development (ASD)

- Key arguments and positioning
- Advocacy strategies
- Anticipated Impacts



Research Approach

- Selected case studies
- Context analysis for study sites
- Site visits to 30 emergent and mature ASD's
- In person interviews with artists, community developers, lenders, funders, architects, designers, and urban planners
- Examined diverse non-profit and private sector projects-- live/work, studio, presentation, and multipurpose spaces

Study Sites

- Detroit, MI
- New Orleans, LA
- Philadelphia, PA
- Pittsburgh, PA
- Providence, RI
- Seattle, WA
- Tucson, AZ



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Important Contextual Factors

- Availability of real estate, location and nature of space
- Artists space development track record
- Special initiatives that include/pertain to artists



Key Public Arguments

- Community Economic Development and Social Improvements
- Viable Business Ventures
- Services to Artists





Community Economic Development and Social Improvements

- Almost half of the projects examined fall in this category
- Artists are presented as catalysts for economic development
- Multi-purpose properties
- Range of financing, lengthy development process



Key Advocacy Strategies

(Community Development and Social Improvement)

- Community Development Corporation (CDC) involvement key
- Community planning process
- Research and projection of potential benefits (market survey, economic impact study)
- CDC collaboration with artists





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Viabile Business Ventures

- 6 of the 23 projects examined were primarily positioned as business ventures
- All include studio/work spaces
- Private investors and commercial lenders key
- Project is positioned as responding to artists demand and a viable business investment



Key Advocacy Strategies

(Viable Business Ventures)

- Market research and cost-benefit analysis
- Artists are catalysts for creative clusters/creative economy
- Public officials and stakeholders held accountable to assertion of interest in creative economy
- Blend for-profit interest with commitment to community benefit/public good





Services to Artists

- 6 initiatives were positioned as serving artists' needs as workers or professional group
- Individual artist leadership key
- Investments and sweat equity of highly motivated artists
- Take-over of otherwise abandoned or neglected sites



Key Advocacy Strategies

(Services to Artists)

- Clear and passionate articulation of vision/project
- Strategic alliances
- Artists' appeal to community/economic development, housing and business fields using norms and languages in those fields
- Entrepreneurial eye (to take advantage of a range of potential resources and opportunities)

Impacts

- Range of Impacts claimed and/or anticipated
 - Effects on artists
 - Effects on broader community
- Very little formal documentation of impacts





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Effects on Artists

- Increased ASD stock and access to it
- Development of ASD infrastructure
- Enhanced artists' careers
- Enhanced artists' relationships to broader community





Effects of Artist Space Development on Broader Community

- Physical impacts
- Social impacts
- Economic impacts





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Physical impacts

- Decreased blight
- Beautification
- Animation of vacant property
- Creation of destination community
- Historic preservation





Social Impacts

- Increased arts based programming for community
- Multi-purpose space for community
- Diversification of low-income communities
- Youth development programming
- Increased intergenerational interaction





Economic Impacts

- Promotion of creative clusters
- Increase in real estate cost/value leading to revitalization/gentrification
- Small scale increase in jobs
- Diversification of community development strategies
- Inclusion of ASD in cultural and community plan



Documentation and Accountability

- Many ASD's are nascent, so difficult to measure impacts
- Base line data used to make the case, not to track progress overtime
- Most evidence of impacts is informal and anecdotal
- Attempts to establish direct impacts of ASD's are not realistic
- Indicator approach is promising but resource intensive (ex. Artscape-Toronto and Metropolitan Chicago Information Center)



Supporting ASD Momentum

- Identification of suitable ASD properties
- Connecting artists to properties
- Convening and involving key stakeholders
- Documenting lessons from ASD experience
- Documenting contributions of ASD's
- Improving practice and cultivating next generation of ASD practitioners

