



The Artist-Developer: A case study of impact through art-centered community development in neighborhoods of color.

Citation

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The Artist-Developer: **A case study of impact through art-centered community development in neighborhoods of color.**

A dissertation presented

by

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to

Harvard Graduate School of Design

in partial fulfillment of the requirements

for the degree of

Doctor of Design

Harvard University

Cambridge, Massachusetts

October 2023

**The Artist-Developer:
A case study of impact through art-centered
community development in neighborhoods of color.**

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Abstract

The Artist-Developer: A case study of impact through art-centered community development in neighborhoods of color.

In this dissertation, I explore the community development work of three prominent African American artists who have used arts-based real estate development to create positive change in their neighborhoods. Through a multiple case study approach, I investigate the real estate, design, and artistic actions that led to the creation of these projects and if there were social benefits that followed. These benefits include social cohesion, adherence to social health determinants, minimization of displacement, and the perception of a strong cultural identity for each neighborhood. By comparing the work of all three artists, I aim to gain insights from community partners, residents, and those within the organizations.

The first chapter of my dissertation highlights the importance of arts in city and neighborhood development and government policies to aid vulnerable communities. The second chapter reviews scholarly literature on the relationship between artists, neighborhood change, and development. In the third chapter, I discuss my research methods and evaluate the benefits and limitations of the case study approach. Chapter four investigates each artist and their organization, exploring their creative practices, the motivations behind their projects, and the real estate actions that made them possible. I examine neighborhood dynamics and the perceived impacts of these projects, discussing the opportunities and challenges they present. In the fifth chapter, I critically analyze the effects of these projects. In the final chapter, I draw conclusions and highlight areas for further research. While these arts-based development projects have positively impacted their neighborhoods, it is essential to note the challenges of maintaining an arts-led community organization. Ultimately, these projects cannot please everyone, but their benefits are far-reaching including improved social cohesion and cultural preservation.

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Acknowledgments

Reverence to the universal loving, creative force that makes all things possible.

Thank you to my mother, Sandra Weaver-Bey, who nurtured my love of the arts and creativity since fingerpaints. I am who I am because of her.

To my outstanding advisor, Dr. Ann Forsyth, thank you for everything. From our first meeting, I knew she had my best interests at heart. I could not have asked for a better person to guide me on this journey. I am thankful for her incredible knowledge, empathy, and patience. For speaking of me kindly to colleagues, bringing me into spaces with benevolent academics from across North America, and supporting my professional and creative endeavors. I am forever grateful.

I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to Professor Toni L. Griffin and Dr. Jennifer Hrabchak Molinsky for their constructive feedback and unique perspectives that helped refine my dissertation.

Dr. Martin Bechthold and Dr. Ali Malkawi, the Doctor of Design Program Directors, made my experience at the Graduate School of Design truly remarkable with their leadership and immense care given to the doctoral students. Thank you to Prof. Jim Stockard for the kind talks and sage advice. The program is what it is with the invaluable contributions of Margaret Moore De Chicoyay, Elizabeth Thorstenson, and Melissa Hulett. Their warmth, knowledge, and amiability are always appreciated.

I want to express my gratitude to my DDes Comrades who have inspired and supported me in countless ways: Dr. Ashley Tennebaum, Dr. Yingying Lyu, Adam Royalty, Esesua Ikpefan,

Dr. Kristen Hunter, Dr. Boya Guo, Seok Min Yeo, and Zhanliang Chen. You are among the most brilliant and gracious people I have ever met, and I am grateful for your warm friendship.

I am grateful to the Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative, the Harvard GSD Real Estate Research Grant, The Joint Center for Housing Studies of Harvard University, the Healthy Places Design Lab, and the Doctor of Design Program for their support of my research.

Thank you to my National Organization of Minority Architects friends Antoine Bryant, Kevin Holland, Bryan Hudson, and Drake Dillard for their help with contacts and interviews.

I am grateful to everyone who was generous with their time and granted me an interview. I also want to thank all the creatives, including artists, photographers, and architects who allowed me to use their work to support my dissertation, especially Stefan Ruiz.

Many thanks to the incredible teams at the Gagosian, Rick Lowe Studio, Project Row Houses, Theaster Gates Studio, The Rebuild Foundation, Mark Bradford Studio, Art + Practice, and Hauser & Wirth.

I owe an immeasurable debt of gratitude to my large, loving family and best friends, Dr. Katherine Marshall Woods and Bonita Martin. You have been my rock, home, and source of joy.

Finally, a special thank you to my friend and DDes Comrade, Dr. Vaughn Horn. When I expressed my fear of rejection in applying to the only doctoral program I was interested in, he replied with utmost confidence, “Aisha, there is no doubt in my mind they would admit you. Apply.”

Terms and definitions used in this dissertation.

| | |
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| Art-based planning | Art or artist-centered neighborhood/district planning initiated by a municipal planning authority and occasionally in concert with a major public or private entity. |
| Art-based development | Land purchase, property renovation, or construction of an arts-related facility, neighborhood, district, or housing by a small or large private entity. |
| Community Development | “a process where community members come together to take collective action and generate solutions to common problems.” ⁱ |
| Naturally Occurring Cultural District | A neighborhood with a high concentration of arts and cultural organizations formed organically by a partnership with community groups, artists, or small businesses. Usually thought of as a grassroots method of developing arts districts. ⁱⁱ |
| Social Sculpture | A term coined by German artist and activist Joseph Beuys. It is the belief that every individual is an artist, people working in concert to shape their environment is art, and that art has transformative power on society ⁱⁱⁱ ; in this dissertation using art to shape communities or the built environment. Art is a social project capable of social transformation. (Trummer 2017) |
| Social Practice Artist | An artist whose work encompasses but is not limited to addressing social issues including politics, justice, sexism, capitalism, etc. A socially engaged art practice creates art that’s socially engaged, where the social interaction is, at some level, the art. (Finkelpearl 2013) |

ⁱ United Nations Definition (1950s) via International Association for Community Development https://www.iacdgloball.org/wp-content/uploads/2020/05/IACD_25-Standards-Guidance-May-2020.pdf

ⁱⁱ Urban Omnibus. 2010. “Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts”. Urban Omnibus. November 17, 2010. <https://urbanomnibus.net/2010/11/naturally-occurring-cultural-districts/>.

ⁱⁱⁱ Artnet.com. 2023. <http://www.artnet.com/artists/joseph-beuys>.

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1

Introduction

Since the early 2000s, there has been a resurgence of the arts serving as an economic driver for cities to establish themselves as cultural centers, create tourist destinations, and revitalize neighborhoods. Richard Florida's 2002 publication of *The Rise of the Creative Class* influenced many municipalities to push for arts and culture as a lure (Ley 2003, Bulick et al. 2003). In a talk discussing his 2018 book *Culture as Weapon: The Art of Influence in Everyday Life*, past chief curator of public arts organization Creative Time, Nato Thompson, argues that cities had used access to art as part of the "brand of urban living".¹ This dissertation explores artist-led and art-based community development in urban areas.

Conversations surrounding urban neighborhoods and social justice have expanded to include art and wellness. Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson, chair of the National Endowment for the Arts,² is an urban planner and tenured professor at the Herbenger Institute for Design and the Arts at Arizona State University. As confirmed by the United States Senate in December of 2021, Dr. Jackson's work centers on art, design, and culture as pillars of healthy communities.³ She spoke about the importance of art-based planning in communities in a webcast on December 7, 2022:

"Increasingly, I am interested in the role of arts in relation to public health, particularly as the public health sector continues to expand its notion on what are determinants of health outcomes, and it begins to meander into the world of community development and planning. I think there is a really robust opportunity for the arts to be in that mix. So as they think about housing, racial inequity, and other things that for many years have traditionally thought about as health issues, I think there's a lot of opportunity for the intersection of arts, culture, and design with health in that space of community development and planning".⁴

¹ "Nato Thompson | Culture as Weapon". 2017. [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=zlWJol9f_mU). Strand Book Store. January 26, 2017. https://youtu.be/zlWJol9f_mU.

² "Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson, NEA Chair". n.d. [www.arts.gov](https://www.arts.gov/about/dr-maria-rosario-jackson-chair-page). National Endowment for the Arts. <https://www.arts.gov/about/dr-maria-rosario-jackson-chair-page>.

³ "Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson". n.d. America250. <https://www.america250.org/bio/dr-maria-rosario-jackson/>.

⁴ "Public Events | Reflections from NEA Chair Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson with Asian Arts Initiative/Friends of the Rail Park and IDEAS xLab webcast" 2023. Quote at 21m:53s. Local Initiatives Support Corporation. Local Initiatives Support Corporation + National Endowment for the Arts. 2023. <https://www.lisc.org/our-initiatives/creative-placemaking/main/public-events/>.

The Executive Branch of the US government recognizes the importance of art-based and cultural development in US neighborhoods. On September 30, 2022, President Joseph R. Biden, Jr. signed Executive Order 14084 - Promoting the Arts, the Humanities, and Museum and Library Services, which in part states:

“It is the policy of my Administration to advance the cultural vitality of the United States by promoting the arts, the humanities, and museum and library services. To that end, my Administration will advance equity, accessibility, and opportunities for all Americans, particularly in underserved communities as defined in Executive Order 13985 of January 20, 2021 (Advancing Racial Equity and Support for Underserved Communities Through the Federal Government) so that they may realize their full potential through the arts, the humanities, and access to museum and library services”.⁵

Therefore, it is an opportune time to reexamine the importance of arts programs and arts-related real estate and community development in some African American communities that have been historically under-resourced and how artists might lead that charge. The relationship between artists and neighborhood evolution has been widely studied but, until recently, rarely triangulated with race or ethnicity. However, a new public discourse regarding African American artists and local community engagement is underway. In the summer of 2021, an exhibit at the Gagosian New York titled *Social Works* highlighted Black artists whose work aligned with "today's cultural movement, in which numerous social factors have converged to produce a heightened urgency for Black artists to utilize space as a community-building tool and means of empowerment.”⁶ (see Figure 1, Exhibited at *Social Works*, Gagosian, NYC).

⁵ “Promoting the Arts, the Humanities, and Museum and Library Services”. 2022. Federal Register. Executive Office of the President, U.S.A. October 5, 2022. <https://www.federalregister.gov/documents/2022/10/05/2022-21839/promoting-the-arts-the-humanities-and-museum-and-library-services>.

⁶ Sargent, Antwaun, et. al, 2021. *Social Works*, Gagosian Press Release, June 2, 2021.



Figure 1 Rick Lowe, *Black Wall Street Journey #5*, 2021. Acrylic and paper collage on canvas, 108 × 192 inches (274.3 × 487.7 cm) © Rick Lowe Studio. Photo: Thomas Dubrock. Courtesy of the artist and Gagosian.

In the program book for the exhibition, Rick Lowe describes a conversation with artists Theaster Gates and Mark Bradford that examined their responsibility as successful artists to respond to the physical space of Black communities.⁷ This question of artist responsibility is one that quite a few Black artists and creatives are pondering. MacArthur Fellow of 2022, architect, and visual artist Amanda Williams completed a series titled the Color(ed) Theory Suite, in which she painted dilapidated houses in Chicago marked for demolition in the colors that reminded her of products from African American culture (Figure 2). In the Color(ed) Theory Suite series, she uses the work to highlight themes of blight and divestment in the South Side of Chicago, asking questions such as "What color is gentrification?" and "What color is urban?"⁸

⁷Sargent, Antwan. 2021. Rick Lowe in Conversation with Walter Hood, *Social Works* program book, 40, Gagosian, June 2021.

⁸ "Color(Ed) Theory: Pink Oil Moisturizer". n.d. National Museum of African American History and Culture. <https://s.si.edu/3W6OBQr>.



Figure 2 Amanda Williams, *Pink Oil Moisturizer (Fall; Overall)*, 2014, part of the Color(ed) Theory Suite, ink on photographic paper, 20 × 28 in. (50.8 × 71.1 cm), Collection of the Smithsonian National Museum of African American History and Culture. © Amanda Williams.

Further examples include artists who have created community centers, neighborhood parks, or use food as a part of their social action. In 2020, Los Angeles-based Artist Lauren Halsey, with her team, started the Summaeverythang Community Center as an extension of her art practice.⁹ Summaeverythang distributes free organic produce to the South Central and Watts communities. The Heidelberg Project in Detroit uses a multi-block outdoor art installation as part of its mission to "improve the lives of people and neighborhoods through art."¹⁰ Jon Gray, 2022 Civic Practice Partnership Artist in Residence at The Metropolitan Museum of Art and co-founder of culinary collective Ghetto Gastro incorporates the idea of social sculpture into their mission to build community through art, activism, and food.¹¹ In addition, there is Lily

⁹ "Summaeverythang - Community Center". n.d. Summaeverythang.org. <https://summaeverythang.org/team>.

¹⁰ "The Heidelberg Project — Mission + Vision". n.d. The Heidelberg Project. <https://www.heidelberg.org/mission-vision>.

¹¹ "Jon Gray". n.d. The Metropolitan Museum of Art. <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/departments/education/civic-practice-project/civic-practice-partnership/jon-gray>.

Yeh and the Village of Arts and Humanities in North Philadelphia.¹² Started over 30 years ago with a \$2,000 grant, Lily Yeh grew the village to three blocks of public parks, community gardens, and educational spaces. The village provides “arts-based opportunities for self-expression and personal success that engage youth and their families, revitalize physical space, and preserve Black heritage.”¹³

There are multiple Black arts development projects that focus on Black space and cultural preservation, community revitalization, and pride and are perceived (at least externally) as vital components of their neighborhoods. Antwan Sargent listed in *Social Works (2021)* arts development projects nationally and internationally that were invested in the work:

“An informal network of Black spaces, being constructed both physically and digitally, uses art as a catalyst to engage in social labor and to address aspects of a vast history of lack. They include: **Project Row Houses, Houston; Stony Island Arts Bank [part of the Rebuild Foundation], Chicago**; NXTHVN, New Haven; Project EATS, New York; Black Rock Senegal, Dakar; See In Black; the Underground Museum, Los Angeles; Home by Ronan Mckenzie, London; **Art + Practice, Los Angeles**; ARTS.BLACK; Conceptual Fade, Philadelphia; Yardy NYC, New York; We Buy Gold, Brooklyn; Medium Tings, Brooklyn; BKhz, Johannesburg; Black Artist Retreat, Chicago; SON, Los Angeles; Jenkins Johnson Projects, Brooklyn; Black Art Library, Detroit; Summaeverythang, Los Angeles; Bubblegum Club, Johannesburg; Ghetto Gastro, Bronx; etc”.¹⁴ [emphasis added]

Three of the projects Sargent mentioned are the case studies for this dissertation. I explored three internationally acclaimed neighborhood development projects by artists Rick Lowe with Project Row Houses, Theaster Gates with the Rebuild Foundation, and Mark Bradford with Art+Practice (Figure 3). These projects are highly lauded, consistently covered in media, and considered extraordinary prototypes for integrating art and cultural identity into neighborhood development. All three were keen on utilizing the architectural assets and

¹² Seronde, Adele. 2013. “Lily Yeh and the Village of Arts & Humanities”. The Master Shift. June 5, 2013. <https://themastershift.com/lily-yeh-and-the-village-of-arts-humanities/>.

¹³ “SPACES – an Artist in Residence Program in North Central Philadelphia”. n.d. Spaces.villagearts.org. <http://spaces.villagearts.org/>.

¹⁴ Sargent, *Social Works*, 5-6

typologies that already existed in their neighborhoods to enhance their projects and add value to the areas. Each artist began with relatively small renovation projects, but their continuous work has their neighborhoods evolving into cultural districts. All are in African American communities and incorporate art and social service aspects, housing, job training, and wellness programming.



Figure 3 (left to right) Theaster Gates, Mark Bradford, and Rick Lowe for the New York Times Style Magazine, "Three Artists Who Think Outside the Box," Nikil Saval, Dec. 3, 2015, Photo: Stefan Ruiz. Courtesy of Stefan Ruiz.

These types of projects' cultural, health, spatial, and social significance deserve closer analysis. This research investigates artists of color who have established urban development projects in African American neighborhoods to determine how their influence is perceived regarding community stability, culture preservation, and equity. It focuses on two key questions:

1. How are nationally lauded arts-based development projects perceived in their communities in terms of neighborhood outcomes, including displacement and culture loss in African American areas?

2. What can be learned about the potential for such arts-based initiatives to benefit their local communities?

Several researchers argue that artists and arts-based development have improved mental health, resulted in better community cohesion, and have sparked neighborhood activism to resist displacement (Fancourt and Finn 2019; Thomas et al. 2015; Lydersen 2004). The Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) from the University of Pennsylvania argues that "Neighborhoods with a vital cultural life also enjoy "spillover effects" -----including stronger community and civic engagement; better health, schooling, and personal security; and economic revitalization."¹⁵ The SIAP Cultural Assets Agglomeration and Neighborhood Revitalization study, published in 2009, found a correlation between Philadelphia's naturally formed cultural districts and housing value improvements in those areas. Research methods included collecting and charting data on the locations of non-profit and commercial arts organizations, neighborhood resident artists, and over 200,000 cultural participants. The study found that people who participated in cultural activities in their communities were more likely to have positive attitudes toward their communities and to participate in other community activities. (Stern and Seifert 2009).

This dissertation works from the following hypotheses:

1. The social practice case study projects are perceived by community members to provide stability, social cohesion, preservation of neighborhood culture, aid in well-being, and help slow the unwanted relocation of longtime inhabitants.
2. This stability, which includes the reduction of cultural displacement,¹⁶ may be related to the vitality of each community. Community and cultural pride, in addition to a sense of spatial agency, are two manifestations of this vitality.

¹⁵ "Social Impact of the Arts Project". n.d. UPenn Scholarly Commons. <https://repository.upenn.edu/exhibits/orgunit/sia>

¹⁶ When I refer to displacement, I am discussing physical and cultural displacement. Three types of displacement (Physical, Financial, and Cultural) are mentioned by Rip Rapson, President and CEO of the Kresge Foundation, when discussing arts and culture as a protection against displacement in African American neighborhoods. McAfee, Michael, and Rip Rapson. 2019. "Widening the Lens: Arts, Culture, and an Equitable Future for All Communities ". Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco. November 13, 2019. <https://bit.ly/3PPUwIz>

It is interesting to note that the perspectives of the three artists in this case study have been constantly evolving regarding the social impact of their practices. Theaster Gates, in 2015, did not prefer the term “social practice artist” to describe himself (Gates, et al. 2015, 44). I imagine he amended his perspective by the 2021 Social Works exhibit at the Gagosian. Likewise, Mark Bradford did not think of Art+Practice as “Social Practice.” In an interview published in 2015, he states, “I don’t look at it as anything other than as a kind of a space within a space” (Butler 2015, 179). But again, his standpoint may have changed in recent years. Strongly influenced by Joseph Beuys, Rick Lowe has always seen the work he was a part of as social sculpture.

Many have remarked on the tension between “community artists and the art establishment” (Goldbard 2006, 59). The artists I investigate in this dissertation have feet rooted in both areas. Rick Lowe was an artist who belonged to or started artist collectives and was featured in many contemporary museum exhibitions prior to Project Row Houses. Theaster Gates star began to rise right after the Listening and Archive Houses were established. Mark Bradford was already considered a world-class artist with considerable fame when he and his partners created Art+Practice. “Artists have roles as agents of transformation that are more socially valuable than mainstream art world roles—and certainly equal in legitimacy” (Goldbard 2006, 43).

One early consideration is whether evaluating organizations like these based on their effectiveness in solving social issues is fair. Should art serve another purpose outside of art? If so, is it in danger of being a means to an end or something almost transactional? This dissertation is not to frame art and social practice as purely an economic or urban development tool but to investigate if there were supplemental benefits that these three arts-

based development projects have created independent of their original purpose. Is it possible that positive perceptions of impact by neighborhood residents may be enough of an advantage for these projects to be considered successful? How can a comprehensive evaluation of the project's success use subjective measures? I discuss this further in Chapter 3.

It is important to note that while Lowe, Gates, and Bradford are often recognized as the driving forces behind these case study projects, they all collaborated with other artists, philanthropists, and community activists or organizations during their initial development. I interviewed a university professor active in arts and culture as social justice work. In talking with them, they shared that social arts and culture work is usually multi-faced and “long term, not necessarily linear, usually messy, often about power, no one group, or person does it alone... it is really asset-based. What are all the assets in a community that are often overlooked?”¹⁷ I asked if there was anything additional I should consider in my research, to which they responded:

“I guess what I was thinking when you were naming the artists you are looking at, and they are all brilliant artists and all leaders, is that in addition to them, I would be really interested to know what in those communities created the conditions where their work could flourish? There’s an ecology involved in those projects, so yes, there’s the leadership of the artist, but who was their counterpart in the community? Who were the other key people they worked with?...What were the concrete things that made it possible? What’s the long view of it? Why could it be developed there and not somewhere else? What were the ingredients that made it happen?”

In addition to answering questions about each project’s inception, it is important to look at early community collaborations (if any) and initial impressions of what these case studies could be. This research is important because it interrogates how these famous projects may be perceived by those they primarily impact, their neighborhoods. This dissertation also contributes to the literature on artists as real estate and community developers, even though

¹⁷ Interview via Zoom 7 December 2022

Lowe and Gates's organizations have been studied (Brynjolson 2019; Ferry 2018; Samborska 2016; Smith 1998). Despite this valuable prior work, there is still limited dialogue regarding artists as property developers and even less about African American artist-developers in the literature. This research examines the results, strategies, challenges, and opportunities demonstrated by these projects, founded in different decades and cities in the United States.

This research can also serve as a reference to city agencies, urban planners, and artists who wish to activate neighborhoods of color that have been underserved. While the artists self-initiated these developments, many are sustained through public-private partnerships and financing from donors and public institutions.

To provide a comprehensive understanding of the research, I present an overview of this dissertation: In the first chapter, I discussed the support of government and policy leaders in arts-based programming and planning in under-resourced neighborhoods. I introduced the idea of arts-based development and social practice by noteworthy artists in the health and cultural preservation of African American areas. I presented the dialogue around the obligation and intent of artists of color to have a stake in neighborhood development. I posed my research questions, touching on the perception of social cohesion and physical/cultural displacement in their neighborhoods.

In chapter two, I introduce concepts, starting with the basic definition of what an artist is and how my case study artists fit into those definitions.¹⁸ I explore artists and their complex relationships to neighborhood change. Then, I discuss the literature about artists as policy change agents and small-scale developers. I discuss the use of art in neighborhoods of color to enforce cultural expression, self-actualization, autonomy, and spatial agency. Finally, I

¹⁸ Some of the artists named earlier in this chapter, like Jon Gray for example, didn't consider themselves artists until someone assigned that designation to them, or they considered themselves an artist as their careers progressed. Quote from Jon Gray about being an artist at 6m:36s. "Jon Gray | Civic Practice Partnership, 2020-2022". 2023. [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grCZjBNTf20). The Met. June 2023. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=grCZjBNTf20>.

derive best practices for arts-based community development from researchers, community organizations, financial institutions, and policy agencies immersed in the work.

In the third chapter, I discuss my research methods, precisely why I selected the projects in this dissertation, and why the case study method was best for analyzing them. I discuss the sources from which I gathered data and how I collected interviews. Most importantly, I review the joys, challenges, and shortcomings I faced when conducting this research.

The fourth chapter is the most extensive, where I consider the case studies in three parts. I present each organization with an overview and discuss them from three scales, looking at the city where they reside and the economic conditions that occurred during the project's inception and the early 2020s. This investigation aims to understand the city and how the case study site fits into the larger picture. I look at the case study neighborhood's physical and social history, including when they grew into being African American enclaves. Then, I look at each artist, describing who they are, their relationship to the neighborhood, their art practices, examples of work, awards won, and how these art-based developments fit into or are an extension of their art practices. I describe why each neighborhood was selected for intervention and the chronological development of the organizations headed by Lowe, Gates, and Bradford. I note any notable partnerships, collaborations, or real estate decisions that played a role in the impetus of these projects. Next, I examine the case studies during my research (2022-2023), detailing organizations' structure, financial and programmatic supporters, and programs for their neighborhoods and the general public. Lastly, I describe neighborhood dynamics, including what internal and external factors are happening during my research and what challenges remain. I detail the perceptions of these organizations by neighborhood residents, community activists, local artists, businesses, and city planners.

Chapter five gives a comparative analysis of the artists and organizations, discussing the similarities, differences, effects, accomplishments, and challenges. I analyze the

organizations through five Social Determinants of Health and discuss perceptions from interviews. Findings showed that social cohesion and cultural preservation were perceived as strong with these projects. In chapter six, I detail the answers to my research questions, form conclusions, takeaways, and lessons learned from these case studies, and finally discuss openings for further research.

2

**Viewing Previous Works:
Artists, Neighborhood Development, and Impact**

What are some perceived successful examples of artists taking on the role of developers in urban neighborhood revitalization projects? What tools do they employ in shaping the physical, cultural, and health landscape of marginalized neighborhoods? This dissertation is informed by existing research that examines who are considered artists, their roles as casual and active participants in neighborhood change, and artists as activists, policy change agents, and minimally as developers.

The literature also examines why artists are naturally equipped to convert disinvested neighborhoods into something considered valuable, artists of color and their influence on communities, and how art can benefit an area's health and social cohesion. This section explores previous scholarly work on the case study artists; Gates and Lowe have been studied extensively, analyzing various angles of their practices. However, I have not encountered significant academic research on Bradford's social practice. I suspect that it has not been studied as much because, in 2023, at less than ten years old, it is still considered new. Lastly, this chapter introduces a framework of assumptions of successful arts-based development through the lens of health and equity.

THE DEFINITION OF AN ARTIST

For this dissertation, I define "artist" as someone who participates in "the arts" as defined by the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act of 1965 (Section 3(b):

"the arts" includes, but is not limited to, music (instrumental and vocal), dance, drama, folk art, creative writing, architecture and allied fields, painting, sculpture, photography, graphic and craft arts, industrial design, costume and fashion design, motion pictures, television, radio, film, video, tape and sound recording, the arts related to the presentation, performance, execution, and exhibition of such major art forms, all those traditional arts practiced by the diverse peoples of this country, and the study and application of the arts to the human environment." (United States Government 1965)

I reference the National Foundation on the Arts and the Humanities Act because it is the most comprehensive definition I have encountered; it is United States government's official

definition of an artist and the Act was the official piece of legislation for the U.S. Congress to create the National Endowment for the Arts that is “the largest funder of the arts and arts education in communities nationwide”.¹⁹ The last line of “the study and application of the arts to the human environment” is particularly apropos for the artists in this case study. The artists that are the focus of this dissertation operate primarily in the visual arts of painting, ceramics, and sculpture, in addition to vocal and video performances.

CULTURAL CAPITAL AND THE TRANSFORMATIVE NATURE OF ARTISTS

Influenced by Pierre Bourdieu's *Field of Cultural Production* (1993) and *Distinction* (1984), David Ley (2003) proposes artists have a natural capacity to turn debris into something desirable, like transforming trash into art or derelict areas into creative communities. Unfortunately, this seemingly innate quality of artists to see the value in neighborhoods others would ignore makes them early and unintentional gentrifiers in disinvested areas.

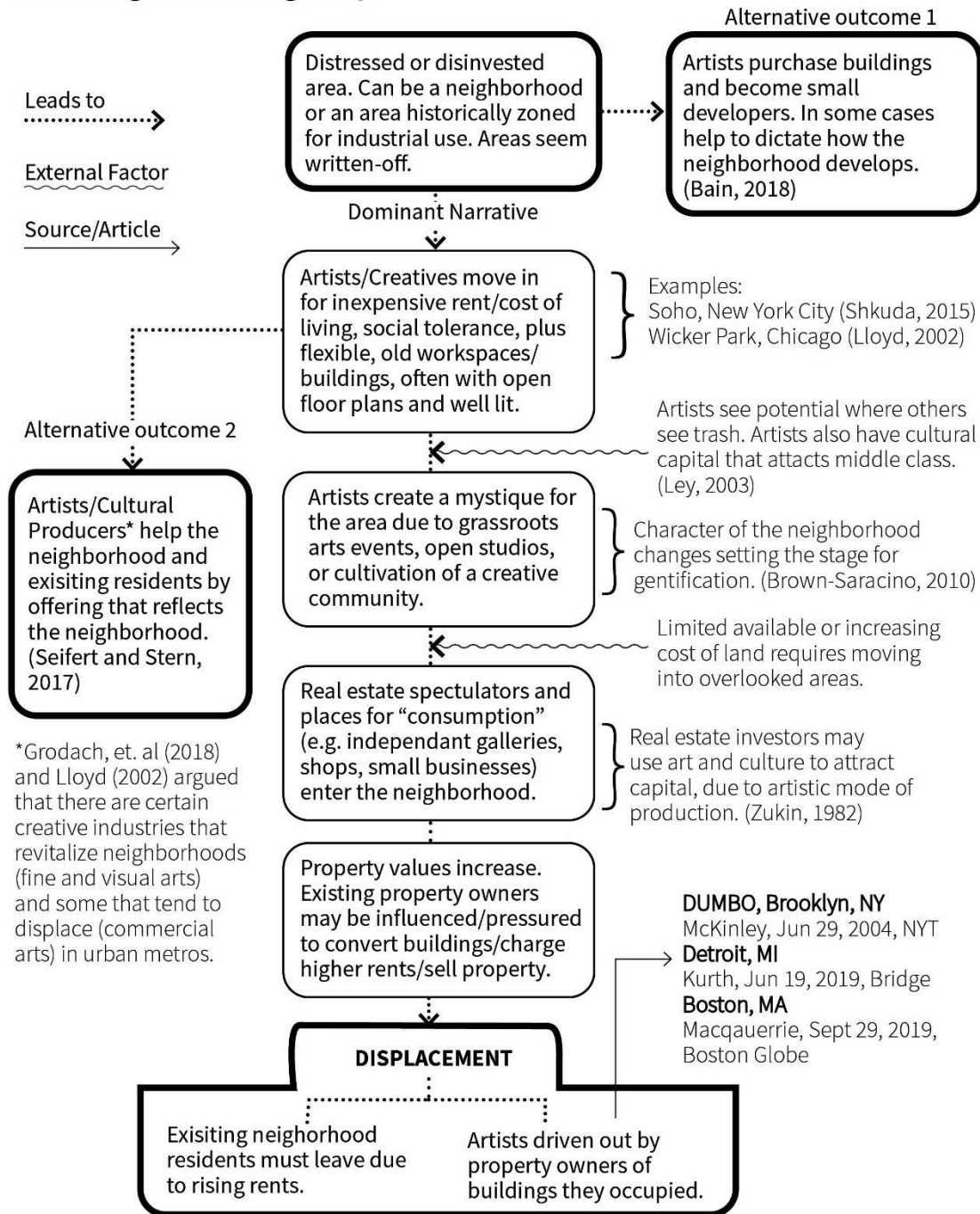
Artists also have rich cultural capital (i.e., social prestige, high public esteem) and usually are college-educated, making them a desirable population to be in proximity. Then there are "cultural intermediaries"(Ley 2003, 2538) in proximity to artists who know how to convert art into a commodity, specifically something prized or sold as valuable. Ley gives examples of who is classified as a cultural intermediary, like those involved in real estate, cuisine, and home decoration.²⁰ However, one can assume through his discourse that gallery owners, retail shop owners, developers, and real estate brokers fit into this category. Access to a commodity (in this case, products, experiences, social hierarchy) as a signal of a middle-class lifestyle (or, again, the brand of urban living) attracts gentrification by those with high economic capital. Ley declares commodities, consumption, and proximity to artists as selling points to the middle class. Ideas of commodity, the cultural cachet of creatives, and cultural districts contribute to the notion of "arts as consumption" (Seifert and Stern 2010, 263). A

¹⁹ “The National Endowment for the Arts - About”. n.d. Www.arts.gov. <https://www.arts.gov/about>.

²⁰ I interpret these professions to mean restaurants and cafes, high end furniture and decorative retail, and the like.

clear connection can be made regarding why artists are considered both progenitors and victims of neighborhood redevelopment in major urban areas (see Figure 4).

Artists, neighborhood development, and gentrification in major cities with hot housing markets - Logic map.



Grodach, et. al (2018), Florida (2018) refute the narrative of arts-based gentrification, and instead have stated that gentrification tends to spur arts development.

Figure 4 Artists, neighborhood development, and gentrification

The artists in the case studies are highly recognized and residents of the neighborhoods their projects are in. These studies analyze their real estate projects' impact on the external and internal perception of their communities.

ARTISTS AND THE COMPLEXITIES OF GENTRIFICATION

Ruth Glass introduced the term “gentrification” in 1964, referring to the rapid change in London when many working-class neighborhoods were “invaded” by the middle class (Brown-Saracino 2010, 22). For this dissertation, I define gentrification as the process of economic investment in a low-income or undervalued community, either by private or municipal entities. This process may result in neighborhood redevelopment with amenities that attract individuals of different (and, as Glass describes, usually higher) educational attainment and socioeconomic status than most existing occupants (Ley 1994). Gentrification does not have to include the physical displacement of lower-income residents, although it can result in "indirect" or "sociocultural displacement" (Davidson and Lees 2005, 1170). As Neil Smith writes in *The Gentrification Debates: A Reader*, literature on gentrification tends to focus on “the socio-economic and cultural characteristics of immigrants, displacement, the federal role in redevelopment, benefits to the city, and creation and destruction of community” (Part Two, Chapter 6, Brown-Saracino, et. al 2010,71). Much literature ties gentrification with geographic mobility, race, and class.

Daniel Makagon argues that the media presents “a diffusion narrative that casts artists as both urban pioneers and victims of gentrification and glosses over the function of artists as the first gentrifiers in some urban neighborhoods” (Makagon 2010, 26). The mainstream press tends to paint artists as “saviors” of neighborhoods lacking any redeeming qualities before they arrived (26). Do artist interventions in a community automatically result in redemption of the neighborhood (Makagon 2010, 39)? Usually, the press about artist-led gentrification depicts the artists as young, White, and college-educated (Makagon 2010 and Ley 1994). Is the

perception of savior the same when the artist is already from the neighborhood and not a transplant?

What happens when an alternate narrative is presented of the artist as a victim? How are artists strategizing to survive neighborhood redevelopment? Based on individual interviews from 32 arts organizations across three boroughs of New York City during 2016, many take a multifaceted approach:

"In response to rapid neighborhood change, different cultural agents find themselves on divergent paths as they respond to challenges and seize opportunities. This happens in four trajectories: 1) the uprooted and replanted—organizations and individuals for whom rapid neighborhood change has made their existing modus operandi and/or location untenable; 2) flourishers—organizations and individuals that have been able to benefit from the economic and social effects of a neighborhood undergoing rapid change; 3) adaptors and transplants—organizations and individuals, both locals and outsiders, that have devised survival strategies in the face of increasing challenges; and 4) new growth—new cultural entities that have seen the emergent ecology as an opportunity" (Seifert and Stern 2017, np).

Seifert and Stern's findings identified artists on the receiving end of gentrification, but we should further interrogate the concept that artists can be early and complicit gentrifiers of communities. Lydersen (2004), Shaw (2011), and Schwartz (2014) all discuss artists setting the stage and, intentionally or otherwise, contributing to an atmosphere of exclusion in the neighborhoods they inhabit. Their presence can also create a particular class hierarchy (Bain 2018). O'Brien, et al., in their 2017 call to action article titled "An Artists' Guide to Not Being Complicit with Gentrification," expresses:

"It's important that people [read: artists] see the devastating impacts of securing housing in working-class and poor neighborhoods and setting up investment properties posing as art spaces. How can this loyalty to the notion of art as a pure form of positive change be reconsidered, particularly when such sentiment encourages the destructive endeavors of parasitic developers and landlords?"²¹

²¹ O'Brien, Heather M., Marin Christina Sanchez Juarez, Betty Marin. "An Artists' Guide to Not Being Complicit with Gentrification." *Hyperallergic*, June 19, 2017. <https://hyperallergic.com/385176/an-artists-guide-to-not-being-complicit-with-gentrification>.

There is contrasting evidence to the tale of artists spurring the negative effects of gentrification. A statistical study of arts industry activity (pre and post-gentrification) in U.S. cities indicates "the standard arts-led gentrification narrative is too generalized or simply no longer applicable to current arts-gentrification processes. Rather, the arts have multiple, even conflicting relationships with gentrification and displacement that depend on context and type of art" (Grodach, et al. 2018, 807).

The literature shows the relationship between the artist and the neighborhood is complex and cannot be reduced to merely portraying artists as victims or gentrifiers. Quite the opposite, Gates, Lowe, and Bradford have taken active ownership and decision-making roles in their neighborhoods. This dissertation qualitatively examines if their projects have affected the displacement of other artists or long-time residents and, if so, how the impact on their neighborhoods is seen by residents. This dissertation also discusses how, as high-profile artists with partnerships with large organizations, their projects still face skepticism or critique for partnering with what may be viewed as gentrifying entities.

ARTIST AS A CHANGE AGENT IN CREATING NEIGHBORHOOD CULTURAL DISTRICTS

The 2014 study of the National Cultural Districts Exchange by Americans for the Arts (Borrup 2014) describes the ways various communities, each employing different approaches, have developed around the arts in the United States. Some strategies lean toward a city government and policy form of development (top-down), and some have grown out of more grassroots neighborhood hands-on initiatives (bottom-up). Borrup completed ethnographic research in seven American cities through his study to understand "the role of social and organizational networks in the planning and management of cultural districts" (27). He found that art/cultural districts that form more organically and grow from bottom-up development strategies, characterized by artist and small business involvement over time, tend to be more stable in the long run than top-down processes. Top-down processes usually involve city planning and outside investors that focus on attracting outside artists and

businesses for creative placemaking. Caron Atlas, Director of arts action group Arts and Democracy, has a similar insight and advocates for the cultivation of Naturally Occurring Cultural Districts (NOCDs)," While some cultural districts are planned and developed as part of institutional initiatives, NOCDs spring up more organically in their neighborhoods, tapping into and strengthening local clusters of creative assets" (Atlas 2013, 3). While I was not studying cultural districts, I examined arts-based development that could form the focal point of such districts.

A 2019 arts and culture ecosystems study from the Rice Kinder Institute for Urban Research has similar findings in support of small, bottom-up, neighborhood-cultivated arts districts. They analyzed the results from three American cities and found:

"...strong neighborhood-based arts ecosystems can provide vehicles for neighborhoods to celebrate and protect that which makes them unique and to share those stories. Street festivals, culturally specific art practices, public art, and other civic assets can bolster and preserve the unique character of neighborhoods. They can also improve social cohesion, foster a sense of place and give residents a way to identify common strengths and challenges. The best versions of public arts and cultural programming are designed and driven by the community and done with care and sensitivity to the social particularities of the neighborhood" (Patterson and Binkovitz 2019, 14).

These examples have outlined the benefits of "natural" cultural districts (Stern and Seifert 2013, 1). Many artists may not be able to negotiate the eventual evolution of the neighborhoods in which they live. However, if allowed to take a more participatory role in some early planning processes or become developers themselves, like the artists in this research, there may be opportunities for more stability.

ARTISTS AS POLICY CHANGE AGENTS AND DEVELOPERS

In the 1960s, artists converted buildings and lobbied to rezone the industrial lofts of SoHo by aligning themselves with well-known and socially connected artists in addition to policymakers. Donald Judd was one of the famous artists who began these conversions when

he purchased a building in 1968 (Schwartz 2014). In one respect, artist housing in the area formed under covert tactics. When the New York City zoning code was overhauled in 1960, artists' communities and housing were not a part of the process. Refurbishing the old industrial buildings for housing was illegal, although artists did it surreptitiously. A decade later, SoHo had become a hot spot, a new model of urban development, with real estate speculation and artist loft tours (arguably, a precedent to the open studios concept) widespread in the area. As a result, SoHo artists organized and bent policymakers' ears to curtail some of the rapid industrial building conversions by outside forces, while some became de facto developers themselves (Schwartz 2014). What also helped was the Soho artists' alignment with significant figures in the art world who brought visibility and gravitas to the cause. Artists made a case to the city that they were vital to the cultural economy and required protection. The city agreed and began to relax the rules on loft conversions. By the 1980s, New York City policy allowed the general population to convert industrial spaces all over the city for residential use (Shkuda 2015). The history of Soho challenges the narrative of antagonism between artists and developers by showing artists taking a role in development.

What happens when artists become full developers and investors in neighborhoods? Do they have a different philosophical and investment approach? My research demonstrated there is insufficient scholarship regarding artists as developers in the present literature, with some exceptions, including work by Bain and Shkuda. For example, Bain (2018) studied James Street North, a street in downtown Hamilton, Ontario, Canada, that experienced a high proportion of artist-led property development. She claimed artists as developers usually cared about the neighborhood's social fabric and were not only concerned with profits and return on investments. Because the artists in Bain's study were also neighborhood residents, they were invested in growth and development, which contributed to the community. Ownership (especially with multiple properties) can help influence policy and civic participation, which is often fueled by high levels of education and wealth. While artists may not always have wealth, they do have social and cultural capital (as discussed earlier by Ley)

and usually high levels of education. Bain documented that the James Street North artists /owners (also referred to as "property actors," Bain 2018. 844) could leverage their power into policy changes, with the neighborhood becoming a recognized arts district. Bain notes that by being able to take advantage of low real estate prices (Hamilton was a struggling historically industrial town), these artist "property actors" (844) were able to prevent their displacement, stabilize arts production, and strengthen the art scene of the street, and have some control over what businesses populated the street. It is important to note that although the artist property owners could prevent their own displacement, some minor displacement occurred. Hamilton, however, was a distinct real estate market whose conditions differs from the hot markets in this research. This dissertation explores Houston, Chicago, and Los Angeles's market conditions during three different periods of establishment, what methods were used to acquire the properties, and each artist's philosophy regarding arts-based development. I was interested in whether arts-based development might have benefits over more standard real estate and community development.

I would be remiss not to mention while doing this research the term "developer" has been challenged by some who have reviewed my work. Developers, often regarded as opportunistic agents who are motivated by construction schedules, loans, and profit, are considered in a negative light. Therefore, I propose a more straightforward definition: a developer improves a neighborhood by adding value to underutilized or vacant land or property. In this definition, I also reference a 2014 article from the New Yorker called "The Real-Estate Artist" by John Colapinto.²² This article spoke about Theaster Gates's work in Chicago, and while the term "Real-Estate Artist" was apt, to my mind, it was deficient in describing the gravitas of the endeavor. These artists are not as market-driven in their efforts,

²² Colapinto, John. "The Real-Estate Artist." The New Yorker, January 12, 2014. <https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/01/20/the-real-estate-artist>.

but their initial actions have influenced other community development and neighboring construction, nonetheless.

ARTISTS, IDENTITY, AND NEIGHBORHOOD STABILITY

During the 1960s and '70s, the artists of Soho invented the loft typology, reprogramming space to suit housing needs. Meanwhile, a different type of arts-based development was occurring in many ethnic neighborhoods. During urban renewal, with the displacement of many communities of color, Black, Latinx, and Asian artists (all creating collectives and movements in reaction to the times) found inventive ways to create and maintain art spaces. For example, Chicano Artists in the late 1960s and early 70s re-purposed an old neighborhood gym space in Los Angeles. They created Self Help Graphics and Art collective that engaged the community in socially engaged art practices, including the Barrio mobile arts studio (made from an old truck) to access more community members (Gates 2019). In New York's Chinatown, a collective called The Basement Workshop consisted partially of a group of artists organizing around Asian self-determination and protest, conducting photography and film workshops, silk screening, and dance classes.²³

The Chicago South Side Community Arts Center, which began in the '40s, thrived in the '70s. A Black arts colony and multiple galleries inhabited Chicago's East 31st Street (the Douglas neighborhood) in 1968. Even in Chicago's Hyde Park, where urban renewal had pushed out many Black businesses and residents, some African American artists were still able to retain their studios (Zorach 2019). During this time, Chicago-based OBAC (Organization of Black American Culture) became COBRA (Coalition of Black Revolutionary Artists), which morphed into the pivotal art collective AFRICOBRA (African Commune of Bad Relevant Artists) (Zorach and Baker 2018).

²³ Wong, Ryan. "A Brief History of the Art Collectives of NYC's Chinatown." Hyperallergic, February 7, 2017. <https://hyperallergic.com/330442/a-brief-history-of-the-art-collectives-of-nycs-chinatown/>.

AFRICOBRA was a significant collective of the Black Arts Movement and a progenitor to what the case study artists of this dissertation are doing. Taking root in the 1960s and '70s, the Black Arts Movement was defined by creating an aesthetic, a vernacular, and symbols that separated itself from White (western) culture and centralized African American musicians' creative output and self-determination, visual artists, and intellectuals (Neal 1968).

Playwright Amiri Baraka, one of the stalwart pioneers of the movement, wrote in an essay:

“We had evolved through our practice a growing rationale for what we felt and did. We wanted Black Art. We felt it could move our people, the Afro-American people, to revolutionary positions. We wanted Black Art that was 1. Identifiably Afro-American. As Black as Bessie Smith or Billie Holiday or Duke Ellington or John Coltrane. That is, we wanted it to express our lives and history, our needs and desires. Our will and our passion. Our self-determination, self-respect and self-defense”. (Baraka 2003, 8)



Figure 5 *Wall of Respect*, Derived from the Chicago Tribune, "Chicago's 'Wall of Respect' inspired neighborhood murals across U.S". Jul 29, 2017. Photo: Robert Abbott Sengstacke via Getty Images.

In Chicago and many other large cities, African Americans claimed identity and control of public space with murals like The Wall of Respect (pictured above). Completed in 1967, some

of its goals were to provide the community with a positive image of itself, inspire an appreciation for the arts, and encourage the development of creativity in their communities:

"The signal intervention into public space of the 1960s was the inspired creation of the Wall of Respect, which made a substantial intervention into its neighborhood and recalibrated notions of art, community, and public. The Wall of Respect radically changed the immediate space around it. It altered the landscape. Until that point, as [AFRICOBRA artist and Wall of Respect contributor] Jeff Donaldson related, Black neighborhoods did not even have Black faces appearing on billboards to sell liquor or cigarettes to the community. It turned the street into a public forum for poetry, music, theater, and political rallies, serving as a platform for both informal encounters and formal events. Stokely Carmichael and other militant political figures spoke to rallies there. Poets read, and musicians performed" (Zorach 2019, 56).

As an aside, the Wall of Respect was torn down in 1972. These Walls of Respect were not confined to African American neighborhoods. Three Walls of Respect were painted in Chinatown, NYC between 1972 and 1977.²⁴

Ideas of spatial agency can be helpful in conceptualizing the relationship between identity and art. In the previous examples of New York, Chicago, and Los Angeles, artists in communities of color were acquiring spaces and forming collective groups to assert their identity, resist cultural erasure, and protest the demolition of neighborhoods that was happening at the time. In addition, these artists were enforcing the concept of spatial agency. Dr. Alesia Montgomery is an Assistant Professor at UCLA and studies the social and environmental justice concerns of low-income, racialized communities.²⁵ She describes "'Spatial agency' as the ability to be in, act on, or exert control over a desired part of the built-and-natural environment--for example, the ability to use, make or regulate a public space" (Montgomery 2016, 777). As discussed by Wong (2017), Zorach (2019), and Gates (2019),

²⁴ Wong 2017

²⁵ Institute of the Environment and Sustainability at UCLA. "Alesia Montgomery | UCLA Institute of the Environment and Sustainability." University of California, Los Angeles, September 20, 2022. <https://www.ioes.ucla.edu/person/alesia-montgomery/>.

Black, Asian, and Latinx neighborhoods have used murals, art, and mobile practices to engage the community, claim public and private spaces, and fortify identity.

The artists described in this dissertation have discussed their craft as a means of sustaining and enriching their communities.^{26 27} They have used their organizations to provide social services, celebrate each neighborhood's character, and promote African American arts, culture, and aesthetics. Black space and autonomy in urban planning requires further examination: "If Blackness mattered to urban design, urbanists would study how Black belongingness, freedom, and spatial agency show up in the public realm" (Jordan-Miller Kenyatta 2022, 290).

The inquiry of this dissertation also aligns with the racial and equity action institute PolicyLink. Their mission is to advocate for radical policies that promote all people of color to achieve economic equity and thrive in healthy communities. I use research and findings from national arts and policy organizations like PolicyLink and ArtPlace America to evaluate and compare my case studies:

"For centuries, low-income communities and communities of color have used arts and culture to navigate and survive systemic racism and oppression. These strategies are essential to retaining collective memory, promoting healing, and liberating the potential within all of us. Arts and culture is not only a strategy to achieve but also a core component of an equitable society".²⁸

²⁶ youtube.com. "Theaster Gates Explores the Politics of the African American Experience | Brilliant Ideas E 14." Bloomberg Originals, 2016. <https://youtu.be/u1D4ne1jQKs>.

²⁷ Youtube.com. "Mark Bradford's Layered Urban Art | Brilliant Ideas E 76." Bloomberg Television, April 3, 2018. <https://youtu.be/I5mhdCvhDtQ>.

²⁸ <https://www.policylink.org/our-work/community/arts-culture>

ART FOR SOCIAL COHESION, BONDING, AND HEALTH

The advantages of the arts for social cohesion and bonding have been analyzed by the World Health Organization, UNESCO,²⁹ and numerous academic journals. A case study that examined a Memphis-based arts organization at the center of a neighborhood revitalization endeavor and its impact on community cohesion describes:

"...the key strengths of an arts-based approach may include particular attention to relational and spatial dimensions of community building and change efforts...The choir, the mural, the poetry slam, and the dance performance are all underrated as change and community-building strategies. They serve as symbolic resources in building new community narratives and challenging dominant cultural narratives" (Thomas, et. al 2015, 75,76).

The arts are helpful for mental health and preventative care. The World Health Organization - Europe, drawing from multiple research methods, including surveys, physiological assessments, and neuroimaging, found benefits of the arts combined with health initiatives such as social support, increased empathy, and a decrease in chronic depression (Fancourt and Finn, 2019).

In many communities of color, health determinants are closely correlated with the environment and access to opportunities.³⁰ The Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion (part of the CDC) suggests "Health starts in our homes, schools, workplaces, neighborhoods, and communities".³¹ As noted earlier in this document, SIAP determined that neighborhoods with a rich cultural life enjoy better health and social well-being:

"Many dimensions of social well-being are tied to economic status. Although low- and

²⁹ Unesco.org. "Cutting Edge | All Aboard! Culture and Social Inclusion | UNESCO." United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, April 20, 2023. <https://www.unesco.org/en/articles/cutting-edge-all-aboard-culture-and-social-inclusion>.

³⁰ Further in this chapter I will frame my assumptions of the benefits of arts-led development through five social determinants of health.

³¹ Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. "Social Determinants of Health." Healthypeople.gov. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, 2020. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>.

moderate-income neighborhoods have relatively few cultural resources, it was these neighborhoods where they found the strongest connection between culture and social well-being. Economic standing, race, and ethnicity are the strongest influences on social well-being. Among neighborhoods facing significant economic challenges, the presence of cultural resources is associated with the most positive outcomes. Culture doesn't "cause" better health or less crime. Rather, cultural resources are integral to a neighborhood ecology that promotes social well-being" (Seifert and Stern 2017, 3).

Unfortunately, many communities of color suffer from chronic stress, the painful psychological and physical effects of racism, and inadequate access to preventative care. Artists engage in social and physical activities in communities of color through dance, painting, drum circles, and photography, which could positively affect neighborhood residents' overall health. As highlighted by Dr. Maria Rosario Jackson in the introduction of this dissertation, the consideration of art, public health, and community planning is gaining traction and hopefully will continue to influence policy. In 2019, the University of Florida Center for Arts in Medicine partnered with ArtPlace America, creating a research lab called Healthy Communities: Arts + Public Health in America³², identifying the five public health issues that the arts can address including collective trauma, racism, social exclusion and isolation, mental health, and chronic disease.

This case study looks at each artist's organizational programming and partnering efforts, analyzing for impact and impressions on overall neighborhood health with the argument that these artistic interventions in neighborhoods contribute to a healthy community. Healthy communities entail collaborations, and each project offers (either directly or indirectly) some form of affordable housing and mental/physical health-based programming.

³² Arts.ufl.edu. "Creating Healthy Communities: Arts + Public Health in America." University of Florida College of the Arts: Center of Arts in Medicine, n.d. <https://arts.ufl.edu/sites/creating-healthy-communities/resources/White-paper/>.

In Figure 6, I give assumptions on the benefits of arts-based development through five social determinants of health. I used the factors from the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services, specifically the Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion, because they seemed more specific than considering public health issues like collective trauma or racism. Each social determinant is linked to at least one action item that I believe can result in healthy outcomes for the entire neighborhood or improve the perception of the neighborhood. For example, initiatives to improve Economic Stability could be providing housing or career/business training for artists and neighborhood residents. Stable housing or career training results in a strong community, even if implemented on a small scale.

When considering the benefits of arts-based development, the focus is often on its positive impact on community building. However, fame and race can also be important factors to consider. If an artist gains fame before or after redeveloping a site for community, this can lead to increased opportunities for exposure, networking, and funding. Additionally, as diversity and representation are being prioritized in the arts, this can increase notoriety and recognition for the neighborhood.

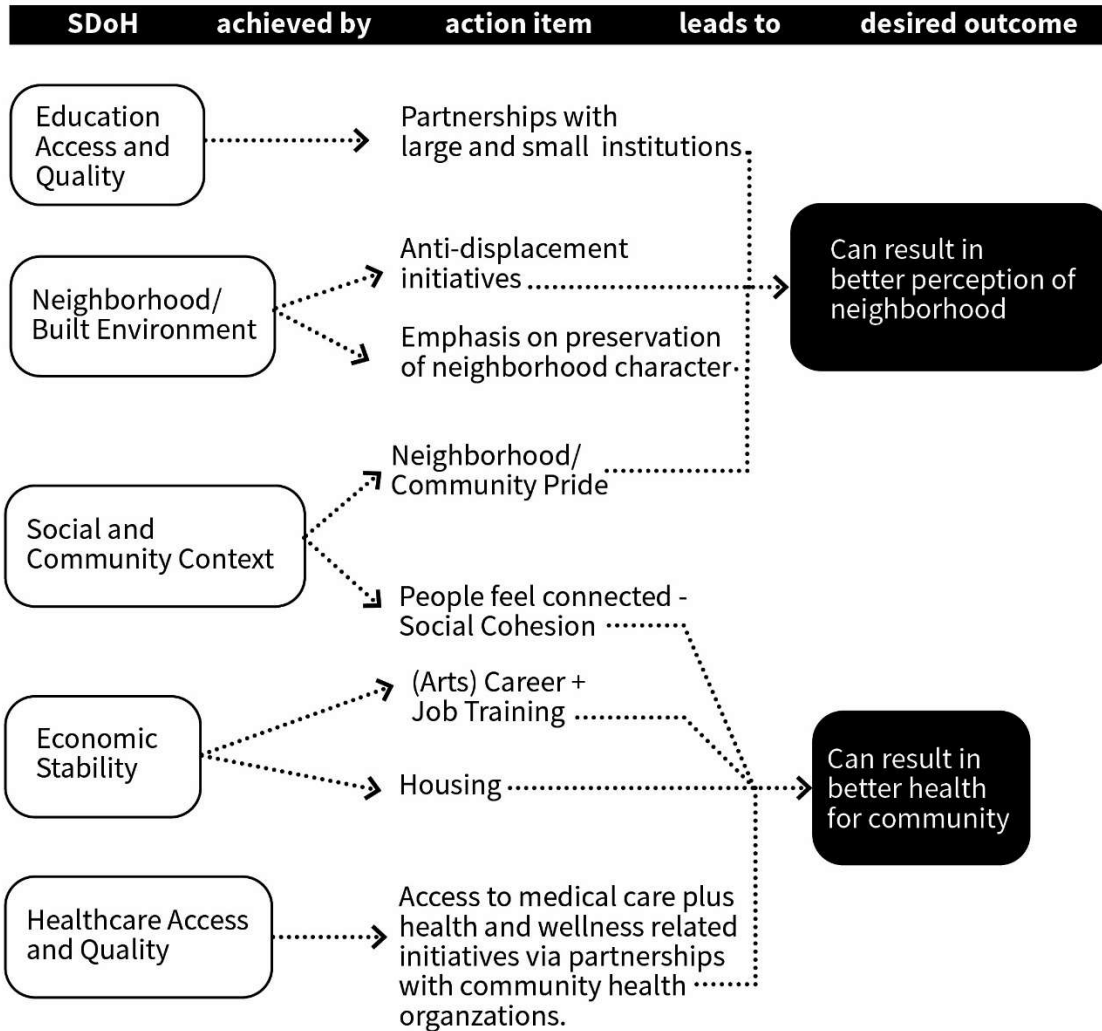
As I delve into the case studies, I will put these assumptions to the test and explore whether the artist's fame or race played a role in how their projects were perceived by the community, their city, and funding resources.

Arts-based development assumptions

Fame + Race

Arts-based development by famous Black artists can contribute to tourism and cachet for a neighborhood, visits from people who usually wouldn't visit African-American neighborhoods.

Arts-based development by famous Black artists has the potential to receive more funding/receive more donations, and have greater access to major institutions (public and private).



Social Determinants of Health (via the U.S.Department of Health and Human Services)

<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>.

Figure 6 Art-based development benefit assumptions through social determinants of health.

PREVIOUS RESEARCH ON ARTISTS OF COLOR AND NEIGHBORHOOD DEVELOPMENT

It would be impossible to list all the research completed about artists of color, social practice art, and neighborhood transformation. The following is a description of some of the scholarly research that most closely pertains to this dissertation and Table 1 summarizes this information.

"Can Creative Placemaking Be a Tool for Building Community Resilience?" uses a case study methodology to study art and community infrastructure initiatives by people of color in Atlanta, Chicago, San Francisco, Duluth, Minnesota, and Wayne, West Virginia. The dissertation examines five U.S.-based community organizations that received a Climate & Cultural Resilience (C&CR) Program Grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities (and distributed through Enterprise Community Partners) in 2017. The C&CR grant recipients each received \$100,000 towards creative placemaking in their low-income, climate-vulnerable communities, with the theory that creative placemaking may provide cultural and social resilience, which in turn will help with climate resilience. Each grant recipient had experience with conducting cultural and climate resilience advancing exercises. The case study investigated "how climate resilience, cultural resilience, and creative placemaking are understood among different stakeholders engaged in community development." It examined how cultural and artistic endeavors resonate with people and build trust, strong social connections, and cohesion, and counteract some forms of NIMBYism. They also lift resident voices to preserve neighborhood identity. Through focus groups and other types of interviews, the study revealed that although there were some gains in each community's cultural and climate efforts, creative placemaking was more helpful in terms of cultural and social endurance than climate resiliency. People viewed their neighborhood more positively with these initiatives. This is important because it undergirds the perspective of creative placemaking strengthening community social cohesion. (Venable-Thomas 2018).

"Artists in Residence: Community Activism and Neighborhood Redevelopment in Socially Engaged Art" investigates current "socially engaged" art projects in the United States and examines them through the lens of race, aesthetic theory, and urban transformation.

Through fieldwork and case studies, the dissertation investigated the use of homes and neighborhood development in social art practice. Project Row Houses (Houston), Dorchester Projects³³ (Chicago, a part of the Rebuild Foundation), Boyle Heights (Los Angeles), Mobile Homestead (Detroit, MI and Dallas, TX), and the Anti-Eviction Mapping Project (Oakland, CA) were the projects analyzed. The results of the research (specifically Project Row Houses and Dorchester Projects/Rebuild) detailed how the projects engaged in practices aimed at benefiting residents and minimizing the effects of gentrification, which was interpreted as displacement, and "challenges conventional understandings of art, its producers and its audiences" (Brynjolson 2019. viii). It also revealed the tension of artists/artist-led organizations needing to partner with or receive funding from larger institutions/organizations who may have initially caused harm in order to have a noticeable positive impact ("addressing structural inequalities" - Brynjolson 2019. 216) on their neighborhoods. This study was helpful in considering the funding sources and operational models of each organization and how they are perceived (Brynjolson 2019).

"Enacting Art and Place Through Socially Engaged Art" is a thesis that discusses the roles of artists and museums in the context of social art practices and communities. The thesis incorporated insight from one-on-one interviews with artists/educators who worked within museums located in a single city in the mid-west of the United States (Rausch 2018). This thesis was helpful in thinking about how artists and larger institutions engage with communities and what are some challenges and sensitivities involved with those relationships.

³³ Dorchester projects consist of Theaster Gates' early projects: Archive House, Listening House and Black Cinema House. These projects are now under the umbrella of the Rebuild Foundation.

"The Art of Staying: Theaster Gates and The Rebuild Foundation" (Samborska 2016) and *"The Art of Place and the Place of Art at Project Row Houses"* (Smith 1998) are theses that examine each artist (Gates and Lowe) and their prominent built works. Samborska, through archival research and reviewing various media, looked at Gates and the Rebuild Foundation in comparison with agonistic politics-How Gates challenges large, institutional power structures by offering a cultural alternative to citizens who do not regularly engage with the art establishment, and highlights the need for various types of cultural institutions in a city. Samborska does not state that Gates distances himself from dominant institutions (because he doesn't), only that he offers alternative spaces to those who are marginalized or non-patrons of dominant cultural establishments. Smith emphasizes the importance of specificity of place, namely the Third Ward in Houston, to the success of Project Row Houses, and analyzes place specific social art practices. The works by Samborska and Smith added additional background to my research and emphasized art and community in Black spatial politics and agency.

In addition to building on existing research, I also reference *The Artist as Culture Producer*, which dispels the trope of the artist as an isolated figure toiling in the studio but as a civic-minded and community-minded agitator:

"...the Artist as Culture Producer is someone who reaches outside of the studio to extend creative energies and pursuits into his or her community. It is more than traditional community building, though, since these artists make work and are not, by definition, social workers. They inject creative culture into the cracks of society, where they alter the direction of small towns and large cities, corporate environments and political campaigns, educational institutions and not-for-profit organizations, and within the art world itself. They are on the front lines but hidden in plain sight, informing, educating, inspiring, challenging conventional wisdom, and helping us with their creativity to solve problems and contribute to the well-being of others" (Louden 2017, 9-10).

Research Dissertation/Theses

| Study | Location | Examination | Study Methods | Findings |
|---|--|---|--|---|
| Can Creative Placemaking Be a Tool for Building Community Resilience? (Venable-Thomas 2018) | Atlanta, GA Chicago, IL San Francisco, CA Duluth, MN, and Wayne, WV. | Five *C&CR grant funded community organizations were investigated for the use of creative placemaking to increase climate resilience and social cohesion. | Focus groups, organization staff interviews, community participant interviews. | Creative placemaking helped more with cultural resiliency than climate. Did not address root causes like trauma/ displacement. |
| Artists in Residence: Community Activism and Neighborhood Redevelopment in Socially Engaged Art (Brynjolson 2019) | Los Angeles and Oakland, CA, Chicago, IL, Detroit, MI, Houston and Dallas, TX. | Utilizing houses and neighborhood projects in socially engaged art, including Project Row Houses and Dorchester Projects. | Case Study with one on one interviews, archival and ethnographic research. | Autonomy/ staying small vs engaging with corporate institutions/ scalability with social arts practices. |
| Enacting Art and Place Through Socially Engaged Art. (Rausch 2018) | A mid-size Mid-Western U.S. city (exact location not disclosed in study). | Individual artist and museum roles in social practice and social engaged art within communities, and future implications to art education. | Narrative Inquiry: Semi-structured interviews. | Art as means of survival, community identity, activist approaches, creating approachable art experiences. |
| The Art of Staying: Theaster Gates and The Rebuild Foundation (Samborska 2016) | Chicago, IL | Gates and Rebuild in relation to theory of agonistic politics. Gates and Rebuild offering alternative spaces to existing (white) dominant institutions. | Archival research and record keeping | Rebuild projects engage with audiences alienated from high art and local politics forcing larger institutions to be more accountable. |
| The Art of Place and the Place of Art at Project Row Houses (Smith 1998) | Houston, TX | The importance of place (Third Ward) in Project Row Houses inception and the art/artists featured. | Archival research, one on one interviews, ethnographic research | Place-based community art as part of contemporary art practice. |

*Cultural and Community Resilience grants given by the National Endowment for the Humanities.

Table 1 Scholarly Research on Creative Placemaking and Community

ARTISTS AND COMMUNITY DEVELOPERS

In a recent publication by the Federal Reserve Bank of San Francisco, titled “Lessons on Collaborative Practice between Artists and Community Developers” (Stephens 2019), insights from artists, community developers, financial institutions, and researchers were reviewed. The publication highlights the rich approaches that can be achieved when community organizations collaborate with artists to preserve and revitalize communities.

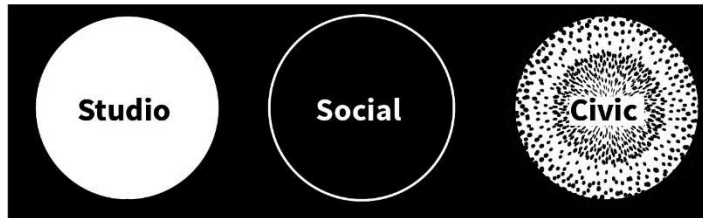
Figure 7 details the five lessons and steps in collaboration between artists and community developers, and it is worth noting that the three artists being investigated in this study intuitively knew these steps and implemented them. All three artists engaged in cultural asset mapping, examining the vernacular architecture, historic buildings, cultural histories, and neighborhood assets of the areas they were working in as starting points. They also partnered with local artists and organizations, creating advisory committees, and artist and partnership rosters to build their work. Each organization built partnerships with other artists and organizations, defining relationships based on shared values and objectives. Lastly, they overcame financial, logistical, and interpersonal challenges to maintain their organizations and missions.

All of these organizations have been successful in their missions, with Art + Practice being ten years old and Project Row Houses celebrating its 30th anniversary. In addition to the five lessons learned, there are four essential practices of art organizations and creative placemaking (Table 2). In the case studies and analysis, these organizations adhere to these practices. The collaboration between artists and community developers can lead to some favorable outcomes, and these artists who served as both implement these practices successfully.

Five lessons on collaborative practice practice between artists and community developers.

(Stephens 2019)

1 Knowledge of types of artistic practice + engagement



Artists create their own work, then engage with the community as audience.

Artists co-create with community on a specific project with the aim of serving a community or public partners self-defined needs.

Artists work with community residents/neighbors on an artist-led vision that involves some level of community participation and an intentional social impact outside the traditional audience experience.

2 Seek out arts partners

Cultural Asset Mapping: Identify cultural and artistic skills, networks, and histories of an area.

Issue a Call: for artists, form rosters, directories, and advisory committees.

Consult with Intermediaries: Consult with experts to find additional artists

3 Define Relationships (with partner artists):

Lead with shared values. Develop internal structures for operation and procedure.

4

Overcome Challenges: Fail early, manage missteps, blind spots, conflict resolution, work with transparency and communication.

5

Sustain the Work: Employing strategies for long term engagement with community and operational best practices.

Figure 7 Lessons learned from collaboration with artists and community developers.

| | |
|-------------------|---|
| Anchoring | Arts organization as stable community organization. Contributes to neighborhood identity. Brings jobs, helps business, attracts patrons who support areas businesses. |
| | |
| Activating | Bringing performance and participatory activities to public spaces to make them more attractive, exciting, and safe. |
| | |
| Fixing | Encourages beautification, engagement, and re-imagining use to existing spaces or spaces that have been derelict. |
| | |
| Planning | Engages residents in neighborhood development process. Solicits input regarding how the neighborhood should develop. |

Source: Bennet, Jamie. "Creative Placemaking in Community Planning and Development. (2014)

Table 2 The four practices of arts organizations and creative placemaking

- This dissertation contributes to the literature by discussing:
1. These three African American Artists as community and real estate developers, comparing their methods of establishment.
 2. How these kinds of property redevelopments and arts programming may affect the perception of Black cultural preservation, social cohesion, neighborhood stability, and ownership.
 3. How these types of projects can be an effective neighborhood development strategy.

3

Preparing the Canvas: Research Design and Methodology

QUESTIONS AND CASE STUDY SELECTION

The objective of this research was to study neighborhood perceptions of the impacts of three highly lauded art-based development projects in African American communities in three major cities in the United States: **Project Row Houses** (Houston, TX), **The Rebuild Foundation** (Chicago, IL), and **Art + Practice** (Los Angeles, CA). A combination of research methods was required to answer the core questions from my dissertation:

1. How are nationally lauded arts-based development projects perceived in their communities in terms of neighborhood outcomes, including displacement and culture loss in African American areas?
2. What can be learned about the potential for such arts-based initiatives to benefit their local communities?

I selected my case studies based on media coverage and personal experience. I visited the Stony Island Arts Bank, part of the Rebuild Foundation and followed its progression in art and architecture media outlets. I learned about Project Row Houses and Art+Practice through word of mouth, frequently seeing them in various art publications. Each case study was an outstanding project (meaning heavily awarded, consistently covered by the media, and considered a model by design/architecture organizations) by a famous male African American artist in a major American city. Neither specific gender or artistic medium was a requirement of my investigation. I selected the case studies because they were the most frequently mentioned in art-related news media, in mass media such as national newspapers, and they or the artist were featured on many philanthropic websites like the Mellon Foundation and Bloomberg Philanthropies. In addition, each artist resided in the neighborhood of their intervention, which made it more likely that there would be reduced adverse effects of neighborhood development and minimal culture loss while improving the area.

These notable projects were located in famous African American neighborhoods in large cities representing different sections of the country (the South, Mid-West, and West Coast) but constructed in different decades, economic periods, and varied housing markets. Each artist

knew each other and tended to compare notes or be advisors on each other's work, giving me additional dimensions to analyze.

Other African American artists have created smaller art-based developments rooted in social practice, such as Titus Khafar in New Haven, CT, with NXTHVN or Linda Goode Bryant in New York City with Project Eats (all mentioned in the introduction chapter). Still, I selected Mark Bradford, Theaster Gates, and Rick Lowe because of the relatively large scale of their work. Also, Rick Lowe's intervention (Project Row Houses) is considered one of the original prototypes of grassroots African American arts-based development.

This study required a mix of some quantitative but primarily qualitative data sources.

QUANTITATIVE DATA

First, it was essential to understand how these organizations were established and with what resources. To better understand how they operated, I looked for their funding sources and budgets. I was able to review their financial records because of their non-profit status via public records on the IRS website. Then, I used limited quantitative data to understand each non-profit organization's financial reserves, grants and donations received, and operating expenses. The Internal Revenue Service tax form submissions (Forms 990, 990-EZ, 990-PF, or 990-T) were downloaded for every year available for each organization. For example, Project Row Houses tax forms were available from 2014-2018, then 2020. In the case of Project Row Houses, some of its financial information was listed on its website. The Rebuild Foundation's 2019 annual report was available on Issuu. Rebuild's tax information from 2016-2020 and Art + Practice's (2013-2021) was also found on ProPublica.org. Lastly, I searched for keywords/phrases such as "Rebuild Foundation grants," "Stony Island Arts Bank Fundraising," "Project Row House Donors," and "Art+Practice collaborators" to find insight into additional financial and partnership data.

Next, I conducted an analysis of neighborhood data, utilizing government sources to gain insights into the environment of each area. By examining population growth or decline, and socioeconomic, demographic, and health data, I was able to gain an understanding of each neighborhood. In addition, I researched metrics such as the total crime index, the designation of opportunity zones, and the area's racial makeup, to get a well-rounded picture. For these metrics, I used data from the U.S. Census and city open data portals.³⁴ I also used information from planning authorities in all three cities, which is covered in more detail later in the chapter. For most health data, I used information from agencies or organizations that had already done the work and analysis. Some agencies or organizations would conduct surveys and collect data through more boots on the ground and in-person methods. When possible, I triangulated or confirmed that data with any Census data. For example, in some cases, I drew on university studies, then checked and compared against city-supplied health and demographic data. The Conduent Healthy Communities Institute (CHCI, a private health organization) created a SociNeeds Index Suite that distills socioeconomic and health indicators to determine the need for services. CHCI gathers data from the American Community Survey (ACS) 2015-2019 and the Center for Disease Control and Prevention's 2018 Places Project. For Chicago, I referenced the Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning Community Data Snapshot, which used ACS 5-year estimates. I used each metric to examine the most acute issues in each neighborhood and to understand if each organization included programming to address any of these points. I then turned to qualitative data to measure programming that contributed to social determinants of health which will be explained in the next section.

QUALITATIVE DATA

I used a variety of qualitative data sources for my dissertations. First was documents and media including published books, dissertations, and newspaper articles from the *New York Times*, *Los Angeles Times*, the *Houston Chronicle*, and community newspapers. I followed arts

³⁴ From Los Angeles, Chicago, and Houston.

media websites that publicized events and/or partnerships with organizations and viewed posted video footage of archival interviews with each artist. I conducted Zoom, phone, and in-person interviews with organizational heads, city planning department officials, and longtime community members and conducted field observation at each site.

When seeking interview candidates, City and neighborhood news sources supplied names of stakeholders, local business owners, and individuals who could comment on localized concerns of gentrification, displacement, or other neighborhood changes like new historic district designation that some felt would harm the long-time occupants of the area.

I focused on knowledgeable key informants to maximize the amount of information from interviews. From an initial review of each site's organizational chart, I identified at least one high-ranking staff member who could speak to the organization's past, present, and future goals for operation, community engagement, and expansion. I also examined their websites and tax documents to find listings of PRH, Rebuild, and Art + Practice board members that could provide further insight. In the rare case that staff information was not listed on a website, I went through the professional networking website LinkedIn to find names.

Social media was a significant benefit in finding prospective interviewees. Each organization's Instagram feeds were examined, and a minimum of 30 images and posts were downloaded and cataloged. I selected posts with people who had partnered with the organizations, people who received some award or benefit, or posts that showed what community initiatives and partnerships the organization was involved in. I looked for volunteers who worked for each case study site and then for names of essential staff in charge of community engagement, social and health programs, or events like grocery drives and market pop-ups, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020-2021. Furthermore, social media, specifically Instagram, provided information about local partnerships. For example, the Young Houston Lawyers Association often partnered with Project Row Houses

to offer free legal advice to residents of the Third Ward. The Neighborhood Network Alliance frequently partnered with The Rebuild Foundation to give food, clothing, and toiletries to the Grand Crossing community members. Alt _ Chicago (pronounced Alt Space Chicago) in partnership with Rebuild would often create pop-up installations at various points in the neighborhood that would supply items of need. I also looked at organizational social media and websites to find what social and health programs were offered. By tracking some of the programs and comparing them to the perceptions gathered from interviews, I was able to gain a deeper understanding of their impact. For example, while examining the Social and Community Context, I carefully listened to the interviewees to determine whether they discussed any aspects of social cohesion. The five social determinants of health were analyzed through the presence of specific programming, any perceptions by individuals via semi-structured interviews, and field and virtual observation (Table 3).

Social determinants of health (SDOH) are the conditions in the environments where people live, work, play, etc. that affect a wide range of health, functioning, and quality-of-life outcomes and risks.^a

| Social Determinants Of Health (via the U.S.Department of Health and Human Services)-CDC | |
|--|---|
| a. Education Access and Quality | Semi-Structured Interviews, Social Media, Organizational Websites, Field and Virtual Observation. |
| b. Neighborhood/ Built Environment | |
| c. Social and Community Context | |
| d. Economic Stability | |
| e. Healthcare Access and Quality | |

a. <https://health.gov/healthypeople/priority-areas/social-determinants-health>
<https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/social-determinants-of-health>

Table 3 Research methods used to proxy impacts on social determinants of health.

As a part of my research, I not only explored the perceptions of the community regarding the neighborhood, but also delved into how these institutions were integrated into the larger framework of the city's urban planning. To achieve this, I examined the municipal websites. I spoke with the city planners responsible for the district, or sometimes, the city as a whole, to

understand how these art-based organizations aligned with the city's development plans. Furthermore, I gathered information on the current evolutions of each neighborhood.

Last, Google Maps was used to locate neighborhood businesses, schools, and community and religious organizations that could provide various perspectives into each case study project's impacts on the area. I sought interviews from various area stakeholders. An initial review of Google Maps also gave a cursory understanding of each neighborhood's major streets, nodes, and other landmarks.

INTERVIEWEE SELECTION AND INTERVIEW PROTOCOL

First, I compiled a list with a minimum of 15 individuals [from the interview subjects gained from the qualitative methods]. Second, I relied on those initial contacts who gave names of individuals who may have had differing, if not conflicting, perspectives on the organizations researched in this study.

With all who agreed to an interview, I conducted our discussions in a semi-structured format (see Appendix for interview questions). First, I asked questions about their positions, relationship to the organization, how long they lived or worked in the area, and their interactions with the organization. For residents and local business owners, I asked how they perceived the organization and what they saw and heard from their neighbors. Then, I asked what their opinion on the impact of each organization on their neighborhood. Finally, at the end of each interview, I would ask if there was someone else I should talk to, and often I was given additional names or other touchpoints that I should investigate.

For those who were in city planning, I also inquired how community arts-based development (bottom-up) and naturally occurring cultural districts (NOCDs) fit into the larger city plan of arts development and tourism. Since these case study projects are highly regarded and

publicized, it would be reasonable to deduce that they would contribute to some small aspect of their city's tourism.

Most interviewees were very generous with information and time. Each interview was scheduled to be a minimum of 30 minutes, but most lasted 45 minutes to 1 hour. In total, I spoke with 32 individuals and spoke with four individuals more than once. Because I was able to establish a rapport with most of the people I interviewed,³⁵ they did not feel the need to “code-switch”³⁶ and phrase things in specific ways. Many people (to my relief) would speak very casually and or use slang with me when moments earlier, I would see them speak in a more formal tone to someone else. To stay true to the feelings of the interviews and respectful to the interviewees, I have included explanations of some terms that may be colloquial, or the meaning would be apparent at the date of this writing but possibly not clear ten years down the line. I have kept many of the people I interviewed anonymous unless their comments could be referenced back to them through a required listing elsewhere in the document. Some interview excerpts in this dissertation are lengthy yet required to understand the full scope.

IMAGES

I found many images from online newspaper articles from the *New York Times* and *Chicago Tribune*, art websites, and the organization's websites and books. My first point of contact would always be the original photographer since the original copyright belongs to the photographer, and they license their work even if the organization or newspaper hired them to take the image. Occasionally, I would contact the organization themselves. Finally, I contacted the galleries the artists were represented by for the original artwork images.

³⁵ I organized each person I talked with in an Excel file by ID number, name, title or position, organization, case study site affiliation, phone or email, age, source of the first point of contact, interview date, and method of discussion; Zoom, phone, or in-person. Most people I interviewed were comfortable using their names, but a select few remained anonymous or I refrained from identifying certain interviewees with specific quotes.

³⁶ Meaning they did not relinquish an immensely relaxed informal manner of speaking in favor of a more formal structured tone and speech.

LIMITATIONS OF STUDY

The Covid-19 pandemic limited travel until late August of 2022. Each organization's ethnographic and field research was limited to four days, but additional interviews were conducted via Zoom and phone. In qualitative research, more generally, observations (including how people interact with each organization's facilities and resources) are usually spread out over an extended period. Still, on reflection, it would have been difficult to gather many authentic reactions and interviews during events without seeming intrusive. In terms of quantitative data, there were some limitations. Using some American Community Survey data had a significant margin of error. In some cases, the margin of error was over 10%. With the qualitative case study approach, the sample of interviewees was relatively small with 32 interviewees.

When studying an imaginative artistic organization, it can be tempting to focus on the most positive aspects of the case. I aimed to manage my positive bias with the case study organizations by looking for as many perspectives as possible. Some organizations had considerable ties and reach in their communities, so finding varied opinions was sometimes tricky. To mitigate my personal bias, I requested a peer review of my interview questions from one colleague. I also obtained peer debriefing from a group of fellows at the Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative Group before the qualitative research and interviews, and the group was very generous in offering advice regarding ways to clarify the study, areas where a more detailed description was needed, and even some quantitative data sites I could consider.

One additional challenge was my desire to quantify with data and statistics the measurable impacts of these organizations; I came to see that beyond some broad indicators of financial and neighborhood data it was not possible. In addition, it was not clear if it was even fair to do so. It is clear, however, that these projects have had positive impacts. Interviews and media acclaim affirm that. However, it is very difficult to track the effects of arts-oriented social organizations.

Ann Markusen and Ann Gadwa, in their 2010 “Creative Placemaking” white paper for the National Endowment for the Arts³⁷ discussed the challenges with tracking outcomes for creative placemaking: “It is quite difficult to determine the precise impacts of a localized intervention, because so many other things are simultaneously influencing the environment. Surprisingly, there are almost no good studies of other types of urban interventions such as stadiums or public housing.” (17). The white paper did mention Economics Professor Stephen Sheppard’s studies on the economic impact of museums on a neighborhood, and the economic impacts of cultural organizations.³⁸ Mark J. Stern, professor of Social History and Studies³⁹ (and the principal investigator in the Social Impact of the Arts Project), describes trying to quantify the impact of Project Row Houses into simple data metrics in the book *What We Made: Conversations on Art and Social Cooperation* Finkelpearl describes their conversation:

“As a pragmatic observer of the city who can produce quantitative charts of social networks, he (Stern) is suspicious of standard measurements of the effects of the arts and argues for an understanding of arts groups as "irrational organizations" that should not be measured by orthodox benchmarks” (Finkelpearl 2013, 133).

INTRICACIES WHICH EXISTED IN THIS STUDY

One of the most challenging parts of this study was conducting interviews. During this process, I had to balance retaining a professional distance yet still being approachable and

³⁷ Ann Markusen and Anne Gadwa, “Creative Placemaking Paper” (National Endowment for the Arts, 2010), , <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/CreativePlacemaking-Paper.pdf>

³⁸ Sheppard states in “Measuring the Economic and Social Impacts of Cultural Organizations” that “Evaluation of the impacts on quality of life and the social structure of communities is more difficult, and three approaches that have been used can potentially measure these impacts. Changes in the value of residential property, changes in survey responses concerning subjective well-being, and analysis of local social networks all show promise in this regard.” (48)

³⁹ UPenn School of Social Policy & Practice. “Mark J. Stern, PhD.” University of Pennsylvania, n.d. <https://www.sp2.upenn.edu/person/mark-stern/>.

genuine. On the other hand, being friendly and relaxed proved beneficial as I was invited to community meetings and social events or told things in confidence, which I wouldn't have received had I remained distant.

For example, because of the genial and warm interactions I enjoyed with some interviewees, they quickly divulged personal information, much that cannot be included in this dissertation, but gave me insight into a neighborhood, person, personality, or organization, and identified things I should look out for. Because of some similarities I shared with some of the people I interviewed (race, university alma mater, work in the arts, taste in music, food, or cultural awareness), most seemed completely natural and at ease. The reader will notice this in some interviews in this document. That was extremely comforting to me as a researcher. However, it also raised ethical issues. For example, while having informal interactions I made sure not to betray the trust of those interviewed by revealing what might be contradictory recollections of the same event by different parties. Alternatively, when I knew that someone was spinning⁴⁰ information furnished to me, it was a challenge to follow up without revealing what I was told by another person.

Not every aspect of the interviews was trouble free. Some people were impossible to reach or I arranged to talk with a person multiple times and never got a full interview. I tried to arrange interviews with specific people, and either they would change at the last minute or never follow through. Some interviewees who would know the person I was trying to reach commented, "You just have to catch (insert name) when you catch them." There were also issues I could never have predicted. One potential interviewee I reached out to passed away suddenly at age 30.

⁴⁰ Giving false or not precisely accurate information. Not done with malicious intent, but undoubtedly not forthcoming.

I wanted to talk directly with the artists (Gates, Bradford, and Lowe), but there were considerable barriers, and understandably so. I was able to reach Rick Lowe via email, who was incredibly gracious. Eventually, I realized many of the questions I may have asked had already been asked in some form or another through various print and television interviews, monographs, or other media. When interviewing the artists themselves became improbable, I looked to other sources.

I am an artist with experience in cinema; after a while, I approached this dissertation like a documentary filmmaker. I made the most vigorous effort to obtain as many interviews as possible but then utilized other archival and source material to tell a complete story.

4

Creating the Work: Case Studies

Case Study Organization Overview

| | Project Row Houses | Rebuild Foundation | Art + Practice |
|---------------------------------|---|--|---|
| Date of Establishment | 1993 | 2008 | 2013 |
| Founder(s) | Rick Lowe , James Bettison, Jesse Lott, Floyd Newsum, Bert Samples, and George Smith. | Theaster Gates | Mark Bradford , Allan DiCastro, Eileen Harris Norton |
| Mission Statement | “We empower people and enrich communities through engagement, art, and direct action.” | “Demonstrate the impact of innovative, ambitious and entrepreneurial cultural initiatives and is enriched by three core values: Black people matter, Black spaces matter, and Black objects matter.” | “Supports the local needs of transition-age foster youth, and children experiencing displacement worldwide through its collaborations with nonprofit social service providers...also provides Angelenos with free access to museum-curated contemporary art...” |
| Organizational Structure | Non-profit | Non-profit | Non-profit |
| Social Services Provided | +Young Mothers Residential Program +F.A.C.E. Program +Food distribution +Small business incubation +Third Ward Tutoring | Partnerships with Alt_Chicago (free food and school supplies) and Neighborhood Network Alliance (food, toiletries, supplies) | Partnership with First Place for Youth, a foster youth service organization and PILAGlobal. |
| Housing | 70 low-mid income housing units via PRH CDC. | 32 mixed income housing units via Dorchester A+HC | N/A |

Table 4 Case Study Overview Chart



Figure 8 Rick Lowe. Photograph by Stefan Ruiz

Case study a: Rick Lowe + Project Row Houses Houston, TX

“Looking at need within the context of opportunity.”⁴¹- Rick Lowe

GENERAL OVERVIEW

Artist Rick Lowe collaborated with six other artists to conceive of Project Row Houses (Figure 9), recognized as an early example of arts-based cultural and community programming, which included a residence program for single mothers, community enrichment programs, and a small business incubator (Dennis 2018). Founded in 1993 to fuse art with community activism, they have been described as the heartbeat of Houston's historic Third Ward neighborhood. Project Row Houses (PRH) celebrated its 30th anniversary in 2023 and has been listed in the New York Times as one of the 25 Most Influential Works of American Protest Art Since World War II (La Force et al. 2020). PRH has received early support

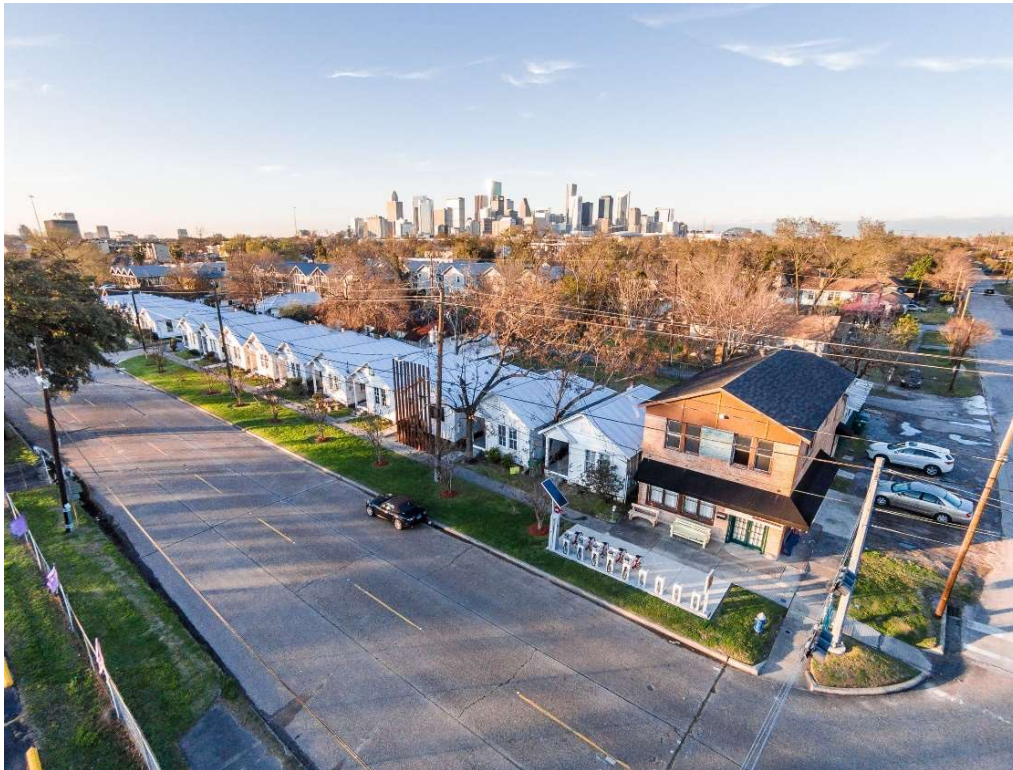


Figure 9 Aerial View of Project Row Houses on Holman Street in 2015. Photo by Peter Molick courtesy of Project Row Houses.

⁴¹ Juxtaposition Arts, “Bruner-Loeb Forum: Rick Lowe, Project Row Houses,” www.youtube.com, June 1, 2011, quote at 5m:22s. 13m:55s. <https://youtu.be/B2mTsozx5Aw>

from the National Endowment of the Arts, the Menil Foundation, the Ford Foundation, and countless others. Project Row Houses has nurtured and collaborated with hundreds of local and nationally known artists while working to maintain the Third Ward and its residents with numerous programs and social services, a community development corporation, and a preservation arm. Project Row Houses is a staunch advocate for preserving the character and long-term residents of the Third Ward. While their efforts have been influential, the real estate market and lack of zoning in Houston has advanced in the neighborhood. As of 2023, the Third Ward is experiencing the tension of gentrification, with new developments being placed against older and sometimes sub-standard housing. Still, Project Row Houses' significance cannot be overstated as it is a vital anchor and landmark for the Third Ward. Project Row Houses has grown from the original 22 houses sitting on 1.5 blocks to its current footprint is approximately five blocks and has 39 properties.⁴²

HOUSTON

When Project Row Houses was founded in 1993, the citizens of Houston, Texas voted down a proposal to apply zoning regulations to the city.⁴³ During that same election the incumbent Mayor Robert “Bob” Lanier won re-election. During Lanier’s tenure as mayor from 1992 to 1998 he instituted tax-increment investment zones (TIRZ),⁴⁴ which “turned parts of town that were considered eyesores into some of [Houston’s] most popular and expensive neighborhoods.”⁴⁵

⁴² Information from the Project Row Houses “We are Artists, We are Neighbors pamphlet and walking map, part of the collection of Aisha Densmore-Bey, obtained on a site visit, August 2022

⁴³ McDonald, J. F. Houston Remains Unzoned. *Land Economics*, 71(1), 137–140. (1995).
<https://doi.org/10.2307/3146764>

⁴⁴ “Special zones created by City Council to attract new investment in an area.” “Harris County, Texas Economic Development,” hcoed.harriscountytexas.gov, n.d., <https://hcoed.harriscountytexas.gov/tirz.aspx>

⁴⁵ Johnson, Laurie. “Remembering the Life and Legacy of Former Houston Mayor Bob Lanier – Houston Public Media.” www.houstonpublicmedia.org, December 23, 2014.
<https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/2014/12/23/54955/remembering-the-life-and-legacy-of-former-houston-mayor-bob-lanier/>.

Portions of the Third Ward have received a TIRZ designation⁴⁶ and the City of Houston’s GIS Open Data Portal shows that Project Row Houses lies in a tax incentive reinvestment zone and an Opportunity Zone, and the 1-45 highway (which borders the Third Ward) is undergoing expansion.⁴⁷ Like most American cities post pandemic of 2020, Houston is experiencing a construction boom. Ranking 11th as one of the best cities to live in the United States,⁴⁸ as of 2022, the city is enjoying rapid economic development.⁴⁹ By 2022 Houston was capitalizing on a 70% job recovery since the 2020 pandemic lows.⁵⁰ The city is experiencing a rush of industries building large projects within the metropolitan area, like the new Hewlett Packard Enterprise Headquarters and the Texas Medical Center Expansion.⁵¹ New construction for the Ion District, hailed as Houston’s Innovation Community, is underway.⁵² This accelerated economic development affects the Third Ward, one of the city’s most famous (and vulnerable) communities. The new Ion District is near the Museum of African American Culture and The Buffalo Soldiers Museum. Across Highway 65 and located in Midtown, the Ion District is less than a mile from the Project Row Houses. In 2021, there was community uproar⁵³ over the new Ion District over fears of gentrification, which translated to a concern of displacement and exclusion of existing low-income residents of the Third Ward. Because of the Third Ward’s close proximity to Downtown (Figure 10) and direct connection to highways, the area is considered a prime location and vulnerable to rapid redevelopment.

⁴⁶ The area around Project Row Houses is a TIRZ.

⁴⁷ Greater Houston Partnership, n.d. <https://www.houston.org/l45>.

⁴⁸ Mistretta, A.J. “Houston Ranks 11th Best City in the Nation in New Report.” www.houston.org, September 20, 2022. <https://www.houston.org/news/houston-ranks-11th-best-city-nation-new-report>.

⁴⁹ Ibid

⁵⁰ Mistretta, A.J. “What’s Coming to Houston in 2022,” www.houston.org, January 4, 2022, <https://www.houston.org/news/whats-coming-houston-2022>

⁵¹ Ibid

⁵² “Home,” The Ion, n.d., . <https://www.ionhouston.com/>

⁵³ The Houston Coalition for Equitable Development Without Displacement, along with other neighborhood groups vowed to disrupt meetings with the developer, Rice Management Company (The asset management arm of Rice University) until a community benefits agreement was signed. For more information see <https://www.houstoncba.org/>. and “3rd Ward community groups promise to continue protests of Houston’s Ion district over gentrification concerns: <https://www.houstonpublicmedia.org/articles/news/business/2021/10/12/>)

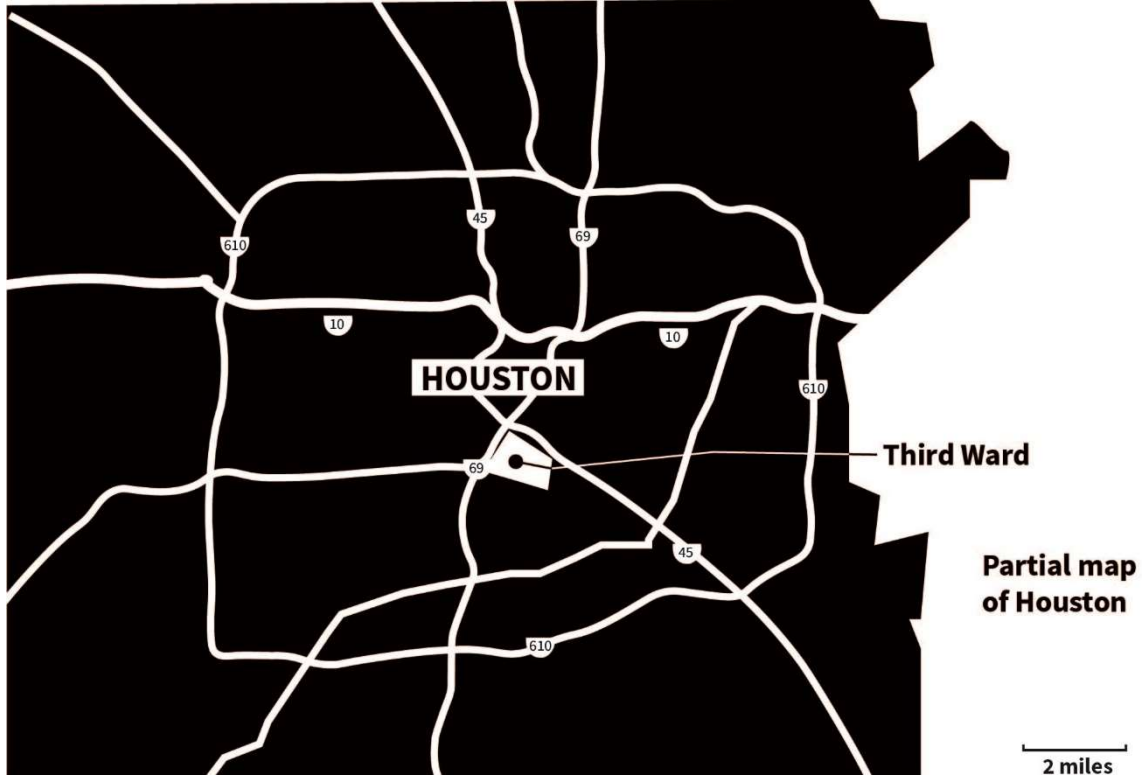


Figure 10 Partial map of Houston, TX showing the proximity of the Third Ward to downtown.

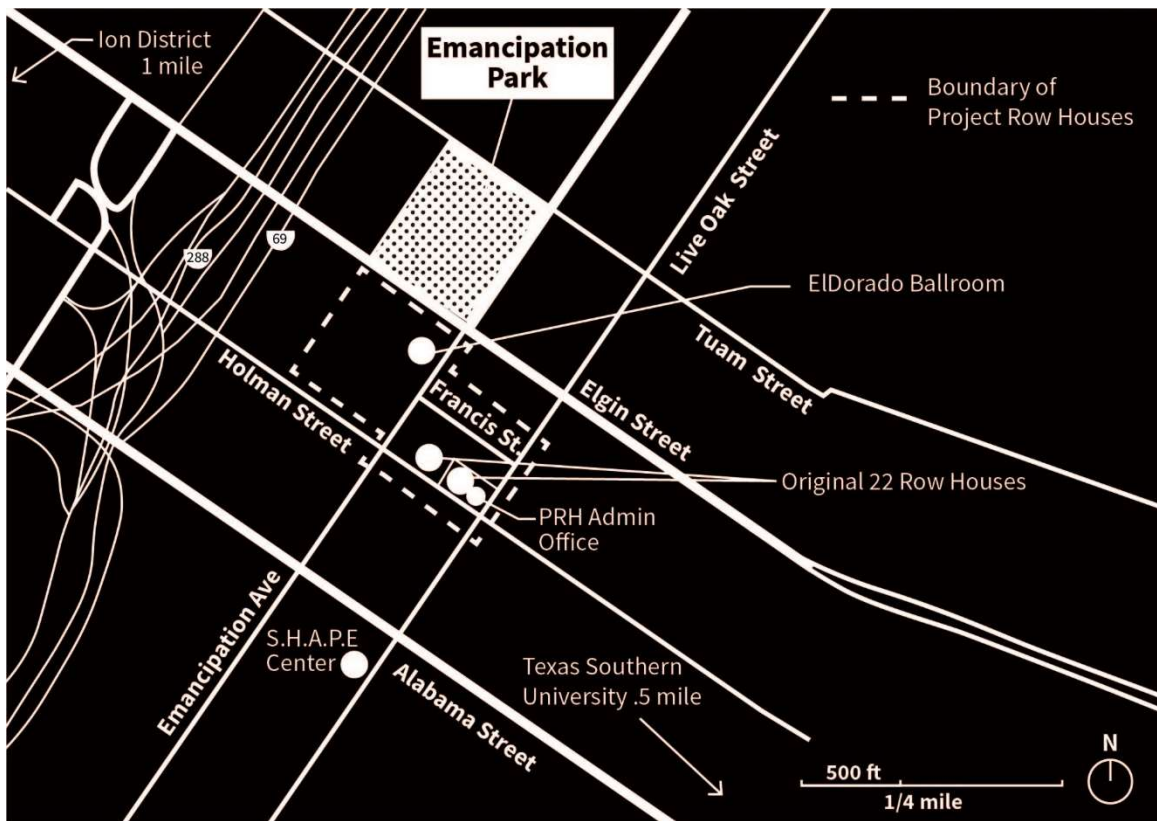


Figure 11 Diagram of the Third Ward and Project Row Houses

THE THIRD WARD

In 1872, the Reverend Jack Yates, along with other influential members of the African American community, were able to purchase 4 acres of land in the Third Ward, which would become Emancipation Park and the location of annual Juneteenth celebrations marking when the last of the enslaved were notified of their freedom in 1865.⁵⁴ During that time the Third Ward was segregated but demographically split between Black and White residents. However, the rest of the Third Ward evolved into a primarily African American community in the late 1930s. Emancipation Park was donated to the City of Houston in 1916, and for more than twenty years, the park was the only public park in Houston open to African Americans.⁵⁵ Emancipation Park underwent a \$33.6 million-dollar renovation in 2017.⁵⁶ The Third Ward is the location of the historically Black university Texas Southern and performance venue, the Eldorado Ballroom (Figure 11).

The Third Ward, like many African American neighborhoods during that time, was described as close-knit, most likely out of necessity and cultural mores. Jerome Washington, a former Third Ward Resident and interviewee from the Andrew Garrison film *ThirdWardTX: a documentary about art, life and real estate* stated fondly, “You didn’t need no fences. You didn’t need no keys. You know you didn’t need to worry about anybody breaking in your house. Because everybody up here knew everybody. Like Richard Pryor say [sic] this is a neighborhood, not a residential district. Yeah. What’s the old African proverb? It takes a village to raise a child. Well, this is what they had in here.”⁵⁷

⁵⁴ Rhodes, Andy. “The Story of Houston’s Third Ward and Emancipation Avenue | THC.Texas.gov - Texas Historical Commission.” www.thc.texas.gov, February 13, 2020. <https://www.thc.texas.gov/blog/story-houstons-third-ward-and-emancipation-avenue>.

⁵⁵ “Super Neighborhood 67 - Greater Third Ward,” www.houstontx.gov, n.d., <https://www.houstontx.gov/superneighborhoods/67.html>

⁵⁶ Perkins & Will . “Restoration of Houston’s Historic Emancipation Park Completes.” Perkins & Will, June 22, 2017. <https://perkinswill.com/news/perkinswill-completes-restoration-of-houston%20%92s-historic-emancipation-park/>.

⁵⁷ Garrison, Andrew. “Third Ward COMMUNITY.” www.youtube.com, 3m:05s. 2011. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ggdrfOxTIEU> (excerpt from 1:45-2:10m)

There is evidence that collective spirit remains. An October 2019 joint report from Rice University’s Center for Health and Biosciences and the Sankofa Institute⁵⁸ revealed that “Collective efficacy, which measures individuals’ willingness to help one another in times of need, was notably high across the Third Ward. Individuals were also willing to find ways to support the neighborhood through formal associations. The percentage of residents that participated in a neighborhood association, resident council, or a civic group exceeded national trends” (Moore et. al 2019, 7). The report was based on door-to-door survey data collected from over 1,600 heads of households (a 49% response rate) during three phases from April 2017 to August 2018.

Though the history of the Third Ward is rich, the population has its obstacles. According to the Housing Affordability metric-2014-2018 ACS data, approximately 47.5% of all rental households in the census tract spend more than 30% of their income on rent, the same rate as the city of Houston.⁵⁹ Forty-six point eight percent of households without mortgages spend more than 30% of their income on housing,⁶⁰ which could indicate that those who are older and own their homes are cost burdened.

According to Census data, the Third Ward had 17,706 residents in 2020. From 2010 to 2020, the Third Ward saw its African American population drop almost 15% to just over eight thousand residents, although the overall population of the neighborhood grew 35%. White residents of the Third Ward increased from 1,283 to 3,465 during that time and now comprise about 20 percent of the population.⁶¹ Some neighboring residents complain about being pushed out by gentrification (Gowdy 2021). The Third Ward had the highest probability of

⁵⁸ Titled the Third Ward Comprehensive Needs Assessment Data Report, which will be discussed in more detail later in this chapter.

⁵⁹ Brannen, John. 2023. 2023 State of Housing: Majority of renters in Harris County and Houston are cost burdened. <https://bit.ly/46te8ld>

⁶⁰ mycity.houstontx.gov. “City of Houston - Domestic Violence and Social Vulnerability Maps,” n.d. <https://mycity.houstontx.gov/myrsvi/cohSVImapping.html>.

⁶¹ Welch, Monique. “These Houston Neighborhoods Are Evolving through Gentrification. Here’s a Look at Their Past and Present.” The Houston Chronicle, September 17, 2021. <https://bit.ly/3ZYszlc>

gentrifying than all other Houston neighborhoods (Choudary 2018), causing residents to feel uneasy about the potential of rising housing costs, encroachment from new developments, possible displacement, and changing of the community (Binkovitz 2016). Yet talk of neighborhood gentrification has been present since at least 2006 (Kimmelman 2006) and prior.

To combat this gentrification, Project Row Houses organized the Emancipation Economic Development Council (EEDC). Formed in 2015,⁶² the EEDC is a coalition of Third Ward religious, cultural, and business organizations that work to ensure equitable development focusing on the area's African American culture and history. The EEDC tagline is "Protect, Preserve, and Revitalize the Third Ward."

In 2017, Mayor Sylvester Turner and Houston's Planning and Development Department created a Complete Communities Action Plan, an effort to offer actionable solutions targeted at five Houston neighborhoods that had experienced disinvestment and neglect, with the goal of 10 plans in 10 neighborhoods over five years. This plan incorporated feedback from religious leaders and community activists, business owners, school representatives, and non-profit organizations to provide sustainable, safe, and healthy communities with affordable housing, quality schools, updated infrastructure, streetscapes, and public art.⁶³ The report was released in 2018. The EEDC, along with other community groups, contributed to this effort by referencing previous policy reports and neighborhood studies created by the EEDC. Goals outlined for the Third Ward were increasing the median household income (from \$24,000 to \$46,000), reducing unemployment from 15% to 4% to match the Houston unemployment rate; which includes supplying local opportunities for employment, growing the local economy by creating mixed-use development and supporting community-owned new businesses, plus adding pop-up spaces for new business, improved access to healthcare,

⁶² <https://emancipationhouston.org/about>

⁶³Third Ward Complete Communities Action Plan.
https://houstoncc.org/our_communities/third_ward/index.php

and building housing for all which was defined by creating a community land trust, incentivizing affordable housing in market rate development, and building more affordable owner and renter housing, and protection from displacement.⁶⁴ Lastly, there was a strong push to preserve the neighborhood's history and character.

A 2019 study was performed jointly by Rice University's Center for Health and Bioscience and the Sankofa Institute. The Sankofa Institute is headed by Assata Richards, Ph.D, who is a Young Mothers Residential Program-Project Row Houses alum. The research team included community residents who often went door to door in the Third Ward to collect data. The total sample size of participants was 1,616. The study revealed that of 1,573 who answered questions about income, more than 66% had an income of less than \$20,000 per year (12). Most residents who answered questions on housing 1,603 rented (81.84%), while 16.92% owned their homes (there was a small percentage that reported neither owning nor renting) (14). Of 1,515 residents, over 23% (23.5%) lived in what was considered inadequate housing, described as one or more of the following: no heat or hot water, no air conditioning, exposed wiring, non-flushing toilets, etc. (15). Rising rental costs and the new townhouses built in the area were the primary reasons respondents were concerned about having to relocate from the Third Ward. An overwhelming majority of the residents (63.52%) (1,609 sample size) reported being extremely worried about the potential loss of African American culture in the neighborhood in the last 12 months. This is understandable, according to the Census of 2000 to 2010 the population of White residents went from 9% to 11% but was projected to jump significantly (according to ACS 5-year survey) to 28% in 2015 (from the Third Ward Complete Community Data Snapshot, July 2018).

Furthermore, the Third Ward faces many health challenges, even after 30 years of Project Row Houses. Of course, health outcomes have many causes including economic, social, environmental, and biological factors. According to the Rice University-Sankofa Institute

⁶⁴ From the Third Ward Complete Communities Action Plan.

study, the neighborhood experienced higher rates of diabetes, approximately 14.3%, compared to the national average of 9.4%. Additionally, the prevalence of hypertension was 36.8%, slightly surpassing the national average of 33%. Heart issues were on par with the national average, with a rate of 9.0% compared to 9% (Moore, et.al, 2019). The neighborhood also exhibited significantly higher rates of depression at 16.7% compared to the national average of 6.8%, while anxiety rates were slightly lower at 17.0% compared to the national average of 19.1% (Moore, et.al, 2019).

The 2021 Houston State of Health Mental Health index serves as a measure of socioeconomic and health factors associated with self-reported poor mental health. Data specific to the 77004-zip code revealed a score of 89.1 (out of 100), indicating a high demand for mental health services. The census tract encompassing Project Row Houses received a score of 97.4.⁶⁵ It is important to note that a study conducted by Rice University and Sankofa found correlation between participants residing in severely inadequate housing and reporting worse physical and mental health conditions (Moore, 2019, pg. 54 and 56).

RICK LOWE, THE ARTIST, AND THE INCEPTION OF PROJECT ROW HOUSES

Born in Eufaula, Alabama Rick Lowe was trained as a visual artist at Columbus College in Georgia and moved to Houston in 1985⁶⁶ (For an overview table of the three artists in this dissertation, see analysis chapter). Once he moved to Houston, he co-founded various artist collectives and unions, was a part of exhibits at contemporary art museums, and was a part of The Third Wards S.H.A.P.E Center.⁶⁷ Lowe spent time under the tutelage of artist Dr. John T.

⁶⁵ <https://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/indexsuite/index/mentalhealth>

⁶⁶ "Rick Lowe Official Website," Rick Lowe, n.d., <https://www.ricklowe.com/>

⁶⁷ a Pan-African community center that, at the time of this writing, is still based in the Third Ward. The author had lunch there during the PRH site visit. S.H.A.P.E stands for Self Help for African People through Education (Rick Lowe gave the acronym meaning from Finkelpearl book, interview, 135. S.H.A.E. is down the street from Project Row Houses. See site map.

Biggers who founded the art department at nearby Texas Southern University and often depicted the beauty and cultural relevance of row houses in his work.

Before the inception of PRH, some of Lowe's work focused on police and racist violence and other societal ills.⁶⁸ However, he was called to rethink his practice in 1990 when a group of high school students visited his studio, and one asked a particularly pointed question:

"I was doing big, billboard-size paintings and cutout sculptures dealing with social issues, and one of the students told me that, sure, the work reflected what was going on in his community, but it wasn't what the community needed. If I was an artist, he said, why didn't I come up with some kind of creative solution to issues instead of just telling people like him what they already knew? That was the defining moment that pushed me out of the studio" (Kimmelman 2006).

While still participating in art exhibitions for established museums, Lowe hinted at the urge to promote art, community, and accessibility. As he noted in 1993, "My goal is to create works and put them in a place that's accessible to everyone, somewhere where people don't have to dress up, pay admission, or be on their best behavior".⁶⁹

In 1993, Project Row Houses (PRH), influenced by both artists Joseph Beuys's idea of "social sculpture" (Dennis 2018, 7) and Dr. John T. Biggers, was established by Rick Lowe, Bert Long, Bert Samples, Jesse Lott, Floyd Newsum, James Bettison, and George Smith, lovingly referred to locally as "The Magnificent Seven" (Figure 12). Part of the social sculpture was the mission of creating program with community, like a "call and response".⁷⁰

⁶⁸ Gagosian. "Rick Lowe". n.d. <https://gagosian.com/artists/rick-lowe/>

⁶⁹ The Arizona Republic, 11, August 17, 1993.

⁷⁰ From Anjeanette Gunter Interview, August 24, 2022

As Jesse Lott,⁷¹ born in 1943, recalled the origin of the Magnificent Seven's partnership was strategic, even though they all had different individual motivations⁷² From his interview with Eureka Gilkey he remembers what is known around PRH founding folklore as the Splendor Summit Weekend: "We all went to Splendor to try to formulate some kind of unified action. How do we promote revolutionary change?... Art was the primary tool to make revolutionary change."



Figure 12 The Magnificent Seven (from left to right) George Smith, Bert Long, Rick Lowe, Bert Samples (seated), James Bettison (in framed photo), Jesse Lott, and Floyd Newsum. Photo courtesy of Project Row Houses.

⁷¹ lovingly referred to by the community as "Brother Jesse".

⁷² Eureka Gilkey, Executive Director of PRH, during a streamed Interview with Jesse Lott asked about the origins of Project Row Houses "What was the block like? The neighborhood? What prompted ya'll to come together in this way?" Jesse Lott response: "Bert Long lived in Splendor. He was doing fine, but some of his not so famous neighbors wanted to be anonymous. They let him know "This is our country. Not your country." He had a nice big Cadillac and the Klan came and marked it up. We had a group of friends who were all trying to make inroads into the arts establishment. It was almost impossible to get your work shown. It was hard to get representatives. Even the education system wasn't working for us. In fact, Dr. Biggers had a show at the Museum of Fine Arts (Houston) and they wouldn't let him in the front door because no one believed he was the artist. He had to go around the back door, and the janitor found someone to let him in, so he went in through the back door." Via "On The Row: Conversations on Social Sculpture" on PRH-All Real Radio- February 22, 2023.

In the same interview he described the groups purchase of the original 22 houses:

“When this group of houses was first discovered, of course, Rick ran up on them, we had two or three meetings on what to do and what the objective was going to be. He was at Texas Southern at the time. These houses were up for sale or demolition. We had a meeting over Jim’s house and [presumably Rick] said “I seen these houses that look just like Dr. Bigger’s drawings. That could be something.” U.S. Homes was having a national sale. The houses were up for sale and they would pay you a certain amount of money to tear it down. Ricky went to Austin. He ain’t no dummy. He did some research and found out that the houses were old enough for historical designation. If we got that we wouldn’t have to tear them down. We can fix them up...

Dr. Chu’s daddy was living in Singapore at the time. His son was Lynn Chu (Dr. Chu). He was living in the two-story (the building that now houses PRH Administrative offices). One night someone came in there and killed him⁷³. So, the old man (Dr. Chu’s father) didn’t want to return [to the United States], so the old man didn’t want the property anymore. So he was ok to sell. He (presumably Rick) had two deals going...when the historical designation came in, we said we could.”



Figure 13 The original Row Houses prior to restoration. Photo by Sheryl Tucker Vasquez courtesy of Project Row Houses

⁷³ Dru. Chu (assumed spelling). I looked for information on this murder or Dr.Chu’s personal history but found no results.

Since establishing Project Row Houses with his cohort, the Magnificent Seven, Lowe has become a highly awarded artist and civic leader. He was a Harvard Loeb Fellow in 2002⁷⁴ and won the Creative Time Annenberg Prize for Art and Social Change in 2010.⁷⁵ He was part of the Venice Architecture Biennale, President Barack Obama appointed him to the National Council on the Arts in 2013 (Sewing 2016), and in 2014 he was named a MacArthur Fellow.⁷⁶ Lowe has also been involved in art programs outside of Houston in neighborhoods needing revitalization: “He has continued such community-based art programs with Greenwood Art Project in Tulsa, Oklahoma (2018–21) and Black Wall Street Journey (2021–) in Chicago, for which he worked with local artists and residents to raise awareness of issues of migration, wealth creation, and the destruction of community around the 1921 Tulsa Race Massacre.”⁷⁷ He has also spearheaded other smaller neighborhood community development efforts in Watts, Los Angeles, CA and North Dallas, TX.⁷⁸

Since stepping down from executive leadership with Project Row Houses in 2018, Lowe has resumed his individual art practice still integrating ideas of social sculpture, land use, economic disparity, and spatial agency in his work (Figure 14). During his tenure at Project Row Houses, Lowe was also personally invested in individuals of the Third Ward and giving people second chances. Virginia Billeaud Anderson of Intown Magazine interviewed Lowe and recalls the tale of “Brother-in-Law”:

I was taken with the photo “Brother-in-Law” of a spiffed-up dude holding a plate of grilled chicken and mentioned it in a newspaper article. I assumed at the time his subject was a popular restaurateur but learned later he had returned to Third Ward after serving over twenty years in prison. His pre-prison dream was to own a restaurant, so Lowe staged him like he lived his dream. Mirroring the row houses’ shift

⁷⁴ “The LOEB Fellowship | Rick Lowe,” The LOEB Fellowship, 2002, <https://loebfellowshigsd.harvard.edu/fellows-alumni/fellows-search/rick-low/>

⁷⁵ Creativetime.org. “Leonore Annenberg Prize for Art and Social Change - Creative Time,” n.d. <https://creativetime.org/summit/prize/#past>.

⁷⁶ www.macfound.org. “Rick Lowe,” September 14, 2014. <https://www.macfound.org/fellows/class-of-2014/rick-low/>

⁷⁷ <https://www.ricklowe.com/>

⁷⁸ Ibid.

from connotations of blight to positive symbols, he said he re-branded the guy into a positive symbol.”⁷⁹

As revealed to me in a later interview by the past Project Manager of the Row House Community Development Corporation, for years Brother-in-Law ran a successful small barbeque business in the Third Ward.

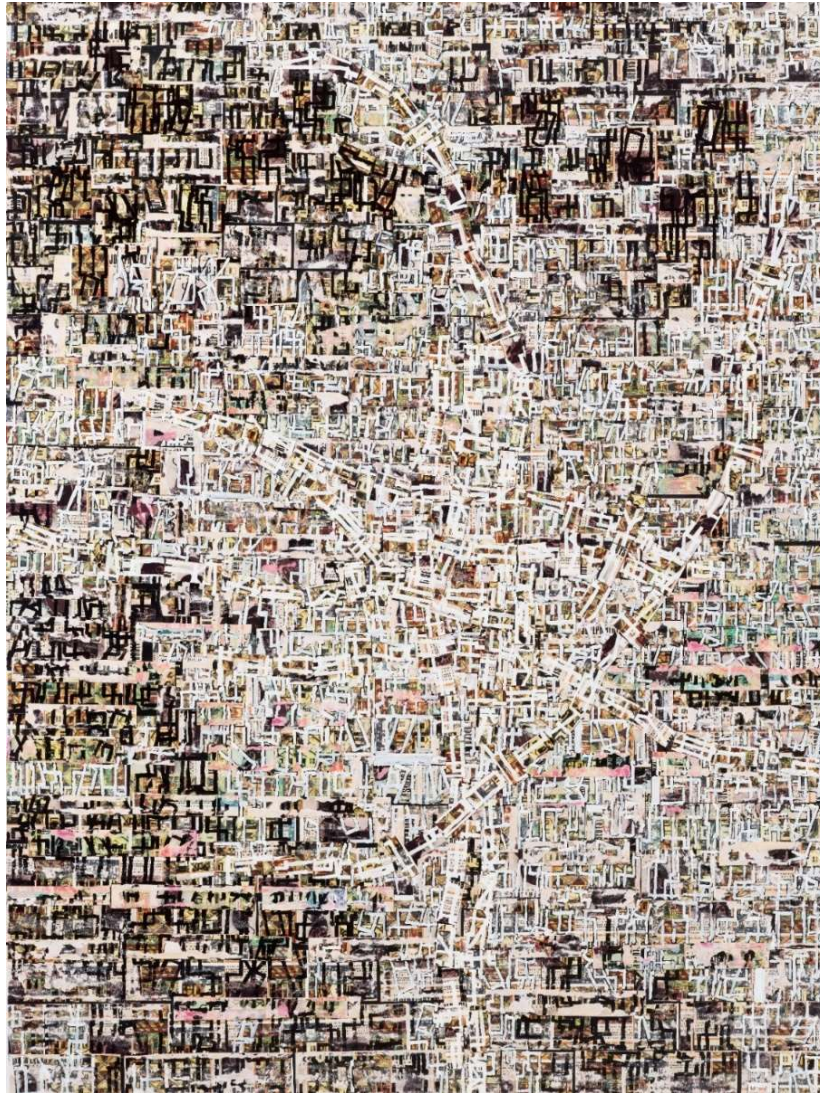


Figure 14 Rick Lowe, *Project Row Houses: Bigger and Beuys*, 2021, Acrylic and paper collage on canvas, 96 x 72 inches (243.8 x 182.9 cm) © Rick Lowe Studio. Photo: Thomas Dubrock. Courtesy the artist and Gagosian.

⁷⁹ Anderson, Virginia Billeaud. “Rick Lowe Moves the Needle on Community Support and Art.” *Intown Magazine*, December 2, 2020. <https://www.intownmag.com/2020/12/rick-low-moves-the-needle-on-community-support-and-art/>.

Project Row Houses Organizational Timeline

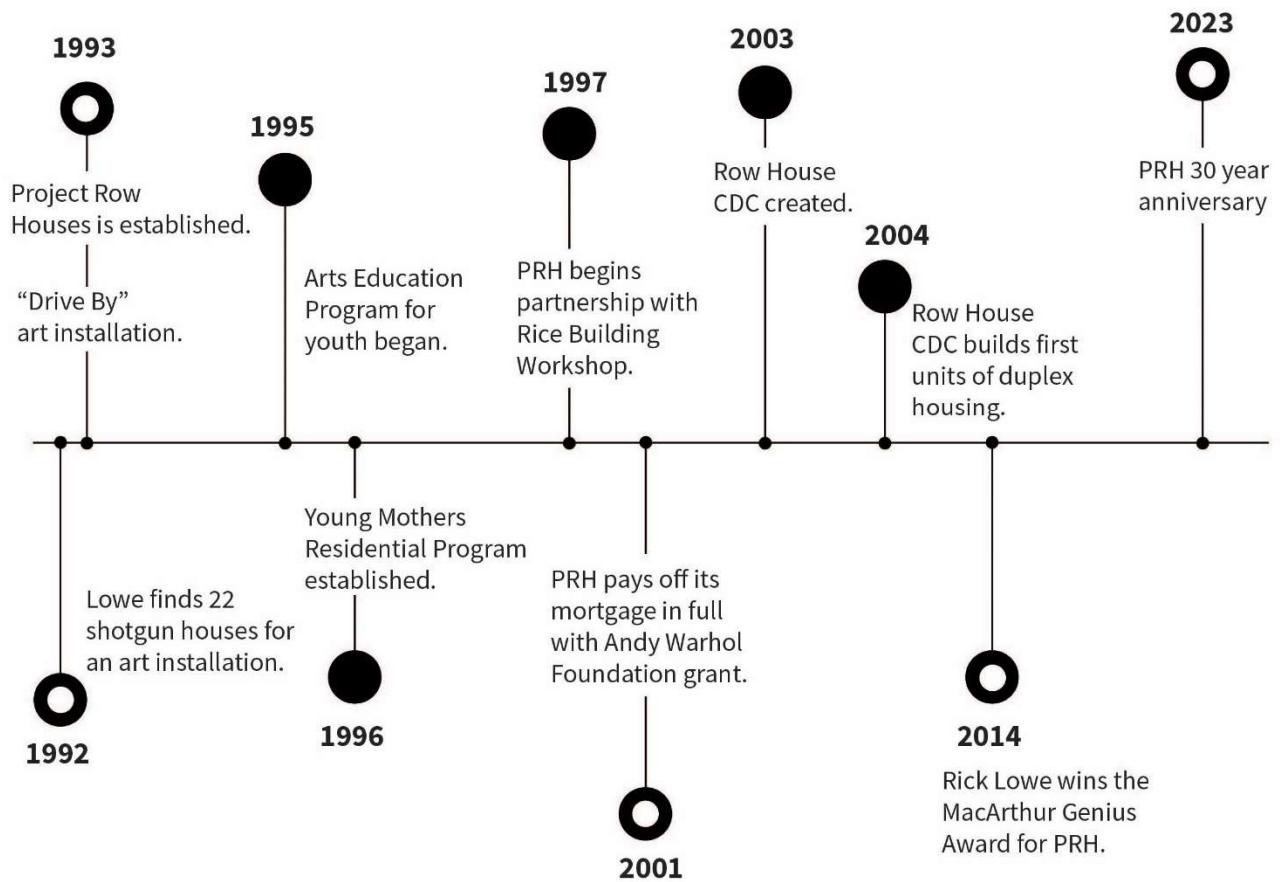


Figure 15 Project Row Houses Development and Organizational Timeline⁸⁰

WHY WAS THIS AREA SELECTED FOR THE INTERVENTION?

When Lowe identified the shotgun houses and wanted to acquire them, he realized that this undertaking could not be an effort just limited to the seven artists, he began spreading the word and “planting the seed and telling people what the possibilities were” (Finkelpearl 2013, 135). The first major partner was in 1993 with the National Endowment for the Arts (NEA) under the request of DiverseWorks, an artist organization that Lowe belonged to at the time. Once the original owner received a letter from Lowe and the NEA stating that they were

⁸⁰ Timeline of significant dates from the Project Row Houses, 2017-2018 Impact Report, 25 years of progress, from the collection of Aisha Densmore-Bey, collected during site visit, August 2022.

interested in renovating the houses, he was interested in selling and a lease-purchase agreement was developed (Finkelppearl 2013). This lease-purchase agreement was for five years, starting in 1993.⁸¹ They purchased the original 22 houses for \$32,000 (Goldberg 1995 and Interview with a former PRH Director).

There are different recollections around the origin of the sale of the original row houses and where the original owner was located. A past PRH Director said the owner was Vietnamese, Jesse Lott says the owner was living in Singapore, and in Rick Lowe's interview in Finkelppearls book, he said the owner was an architect living in Taiwan. Differing recollections aside, the owner sold to the group.

During its inception, residents seemed delighted that the neighborhood would be receiving an arts development project to restore the decrepit shotgun houses on Holman Street. One community member described the project as "like a blood transfusion. It has given life to the community" (Goldberg 1995). The Third Ward was the epicenter of African American life and culture in Houston; and it had suffered a great decline due to the community being flooded with drugs and an increase in crime.

The restoration of the 22 houses designated as part of the project was more than a community or city-wide but seemingly a national effort:

"The National Endowment for the Arts gave \$25,000 in seed money (for the original purchase). Amoco offered its employees around the country a day off to go to Houston and help, and Chevron followed suit. Home Depot pitched in with materials. The city's museums and nonprofit galleries sent curators, carpenters and electricians. The sheriff sent nonviolent juvenile offenders to work off their fines, and Houston residents turned out in force. Heaps of trash and piles of used needles were cleared away, and all 22 of the houses were fully or partly restored for the art exhibition and studio space, an office, permanent and temporary housing for artists and the various educational programs" (Goldberg, 1995).

⁸¹ From the Project Row Houses, 2017-2018 Impact Report, 25 years of progress, from the collection of Aisha Densmore-Bey, collected during site visit, August 2022.

Jesse Lott's interview with Eureka Gilkey PRH-All Real Radio, 2023) revealed additional funding sources in the acquisition of the original 22 houses:

“Isaac Heimbinder. Isaac Heimbinder funded the acquisition of the place.⁸² Next thing you know he blocked off the street and had a big ol' movie about Dr. Biggers and the evolution of the Shotgun house.

The city had mandated that once the houses were purchased and transferred to different ownership, they had to be made safe. So, each door and window, they had to be sealed over. But someone wanted to do an exhibition. So how do you do an exhibition. You do it on the outside.”

Jesse Lott gave the idea for the first exhibition or “Artist Round”, at PRH called the “Drive-By”. In 1993 the land around the houses had been cleared, but the structures themselves were still raw and the openings had to be covered. They gathered nine important African American artists from around Texas⁸³ and created artwork to be displayed on the exterior of the houses (Figures 16 and 17).



Figure 16 The first exhibition or “Round” at PRH. The Drive-By, conceived by Jesse Lott, 1993. Courtesy of Project Row Houses.

⁸² The Heimbinder Family Foundation funded the properties, acquisition document-General Warranty Deed with Vendors Lien-in Appendix.

⁸³ From the Project Row Houses “Art Programs” pamphlet, from the from the collection of Aisha Densmore-Bey, collected during site visit, August 2022.

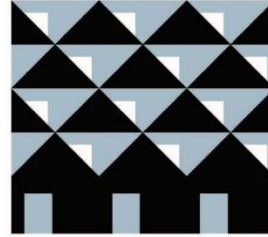
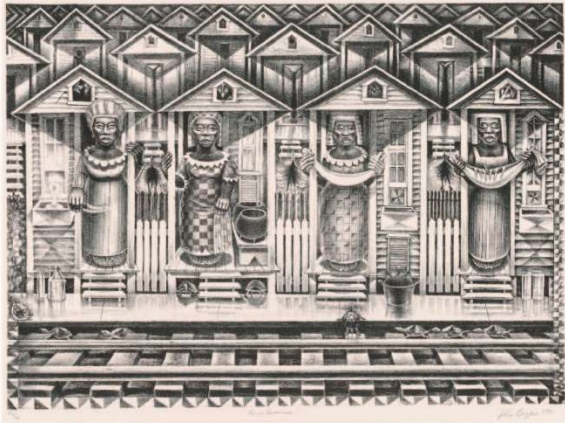


Figure 17 Drive by Exhibit at PRH - Installation of Image by Israel McCloud 1993 courtesy of Project Row Houses.

In addition to the form and history of the row houses the philosophy and artwork of John Biggers had a huge influence on PRH down to their logo⁸⁴ (Figures 18 and 19). When Jesse Lott was asked⁸⁵ about his relationship with John Biggers: “We siting up in one of his drawings right now! All he used to do was draw houses. He built a lot of his compositions around shotgun houses.”... I was never a student of Dr. Biggers at Texas Southern, in 1958 is when I met Dr. Biggers. He was a storyteller, but a teacher above all. Every time you saw him it was a lesson...I kinda miss him. But the information is still there.”

⁸⁴ Project Row Houses. “Media/Research,” n.d. <https://projectrowhouses.org/about/media-research/>.

⁸⁵ During the Eureka Gilkey interview.



**PROJECT
ROW
HOUSES**

Figure 18 *The Four Seasons*, 1990. John Biggers (American, 1924–2001). Lithograph printed in Black and brown; image: 57.2 x 78.8 cm (22 1/2 x 31 in.); sheet: 63 x 86.8 cm (24 13/16 x 34 3/16 in.). The Cleveland Museum of Art, John L. Severance Fund 2003.33 © John T. Biggers Estate / Licensed by VAGA at Artists Rights Society (ARS), NY, Estate Represented by Michael Rosenfeld Gallery. Courtesy of The Cleveland Museum of Art **Figure 19** Project Row Houses Logo, Courtesy of Project Row Houses

EARLY SUPPORTERS AND PRESS COVERAGE

Additional early supporters of Project Row Houses included The Menil Foundation: later Lowe was on the board of Trustees (Menil Collection Annual Report 2013-2017), The Kinder Foundation, and The Chevron Corporation.

Yet in the early days PRH faced some obstacles. It was reported in the local media that one employee embezzled \$200,000 from the organization.⁸⁶ Initial press wasn't all flattering and sometimes tone-deaf, short-sighted, and bordering on racist. In the early days of Project Row Houses' establishment, Deborah Grotfeldt was its managing director and, as Vicki Goldberg, writer for The New York Times, so thoughtlessly wrote, "the only White on the staff" (Goldberg, 1995). Even worse, Goldberg states that Grotfeldt's "short, stand-up bleached-blond hair and pale blue eyes, coupled with Mr. Lowe's unruly dreadlocks, lend the project a

⁸⁶ Administrator admits stealing from Project Row Houses, Patricia C. Johnson, Houston Chronicle Nov. 19, 2006 <https://www.chron.com/entertainment/article/Administrator-admits-stealing-from-Project-Row-1565668.php>

credible air of diversity” (Figure 20) which illustrates how the people behind the project were covered by some members of the press. Two additional obtuse questions posed by the article were “Does art plunked down into minority neighborhoods cater to White connoisseurs alone? And can it really be useful to people in an impoverished inner-city neighborhood?” Viewing art’s validity through a White lens while questioning if it can be useful to those without financial means implies the purely human trait of appreciating creativity can only be valued by the wealthy. As Goldberg, wrote in her 1995 article *ART; In Houston, Rebuilding by Creating* “How much lasting effect all this will have on the poverty-stricken neighborhood remains to be seen, but the beginnings are promising” (Goldberg 1995).



Figure 20 Rick Lowe and Deborah Grotfeldt, original managing director of Project Row Houses, taken during filming of *Third Ward TX* (2007). Photo courtesy of Nancy Bess and Andy Garrison.

In 1996, after some research, PRH found that approximately 70% of the children born in the community were born to single parents, primarily single mothers. The challenge for single mothers was housing insecurity. This led to the Young Mothers in Residence Program (YMRP), which used five of the original 22 houses for the program. Occupants could live rent-free for one year. They had curfews, had to continue their education, and they were matched with some level of employment.⁸⁷ Assata-Nicole Richards was one resident:

“I spent approximately eighteen months in the YMRP. During this time, I finished the AmeriCorps program and returned to the University of Houston as a freshman on the scholarship that I earned. I graduated with honors in the summer of 1998 with a full fellowship...at Pennsylvania State University, where I earned my Ph.D. in 2004, and accepted a tenure track position at the University of Pittsburgh. The impact of the YMRP on my life is profoundly apparent...when I returned to the University of Houston, I did so as an affirmation of my value and potential, a belief the YMRP seeded within me.” (Dennis 2018, p. 30)

Between 1997-2018, there were over 70 participants in the Young Mothers Residential Program (Dennis 2018, p. 110-111) and over 100 participants total. As of 2022, the YMRP has been sunsetted, and housing services are now operating through the PRH Financial, Artistic, Career & Empowerment Center (F.A.C.E) program, which will be discussed later in this chapter.

The Andy Warhol Foundation grant helped PRH pay off its mortgage in 2001.⁸⁸

ROW HOUSE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION AND PRH PRESERVATION

The Row House CDC (which manages affordable housing creation) and PRH Preservation are sister organizations of Project Row Houses. After establishing the Young Mothers Residential Program, PRH realized that after the one-year tenure in the program many mothers needed

⁸⁷ From an interview with a former PRH Director, October 18, 2022

⁸⁸ from the Project Row Houses, 2017-2018 Impact Report, 25 years of progress, from the collection of Aisha Densmore-Bey, obtained during a site visit, August 2022.

housing after they transitioned out of the YMRP. In 1997, PRH began a partnership with the Rice University architecture school's Building Workshop (RBW).

This collaboration resulted in a student design/build housing prototype called "The Six-Square House" that replicated the existing shotgun houses in the Third Ward. The RBW completed additional construction drawings for more iterations of housing in 1998, but the plans laid dormant for years. In 2003, the Row House CDC was formed to develop housing, but they realized they had no one on staff to manage the building of the homes. A former staff member told an amusing story of how their unconventional interview resulted in them joining the organization. Around 2003 they interviewed Deborah Grotfeldt directly after playing dominoes in the PRH offices with some of the neighborhood's residents (one of which was the aforementioned "Brother-N-Law"), who were on site. Grotfeldt hired them on the spot and their title was "Project Manager." After joining PRH they helped start the non-profit for affordable housing (Row House CDC).⁸⁹ The CDC consisted of themselves and Grotfeldt, equipped with Rice University drawings from 1998. The new CDC was responsible for duplex houses. Eight units were built on Division Street directly behind PRH. The units were the first new affordable housing in the Third Ward in 20 years. Fannie Mae, The City of Houston, the Federal Home Loan Bank of Dallas, and Whitney Bank supported the CDC's first affordable housing developments.⁹⁰

Once the duplexes were occupied, a resident's council was established that looked at community cleanup, but it was also a community that watched over the neighborhood children. The former staff member I interviewed was at PRH for about four years, their first-year fundraising and vetting for contractors. In 2004, Grotfeldt left the organization, and they

⁸⁹ From an interview with a former PRH Director, October 18, 2022.

⁹⁰ Bobb, Maurice. "Housing Project Targets Families for Third Ward." Chron, October 28, 2004. <https://www.chron.com/neighborhood/heights-news/article/Housing-project-targets-families-for-Third-Ward-1625249.php>.

became Executive Director. They left PRH CDC in 2007. The organization mourned Deborah Grotfeldt’s passing on September 30, 2022.⁹¹

In 2008 eight additional duplex houses (Figure 21) were designed by the Rice Building Workshop and built on Francis Street. There have been six additional housing developments that have been built since 2008. The Row House CDC provides over 70 low to moderate-income housing units in the Third Ward. As of 2022, Row House CDC is headed by Libby Viera-Bland, but the housing is managed by CES Management, a Black owned property management firm that focuses on “underperforming” multi-unit housing renovations.⁹² PRH Preservation was established in 2018 as a response to the many abandoned and run-down properties in the neighborhood.



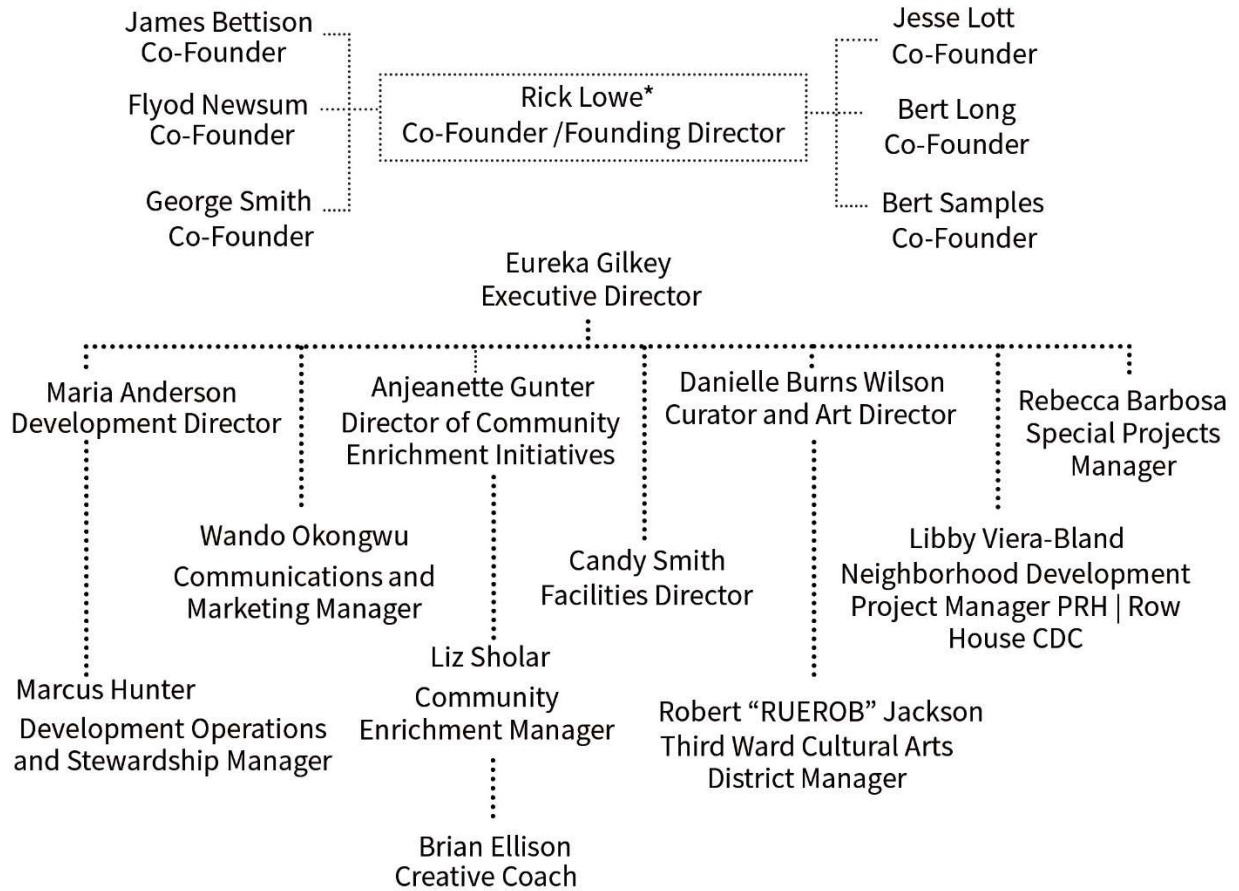
Figure 21 Duplex homes on Francis Street. Photo by the author.

⁹¹ PRH (@projectrowhouses) Instagram, October 5, 2022, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CjWRkCLOHhf/>

⁹² cesmanagement.net. “ABOUT US – CES Management Group,” n.d. <https://cesmanagement.net/about-us/>.

2022-2023 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, INCOME, OPERATING BUDGET AND PROGRAMMING.

Project Row Houses Organizational Chart (abbreviated)



*No longer involved with the daily operations of PRH.

**Some names and titles not listed for clarity and brevity.

Figure 22 Project Row Houses Organizational Chart (as of 2023). Docents and other members of PRH were left off this chart for brevity.

As of 2023, there are 23 staff members of Project Row Houses (Figure 22). According to the 2012-2020 years of 990 tax forms, Project Row Houses revenue seems to average around \$1.5 million per year, with two years being exceptional with a revenue of over three million each year, although one year the organization was in a surplus and the next a deficit (Figure 24 and Table 2). Continuing financial support for Project Row Houses comes from public donations

and grants. A partial listing of PRH supporters, derived from their website, is below (Figure 23). Additional funders include: Houston native and Grammy award winning singer and artist, Solange, donated her \$100,000 award for Artists Creating Social Impact to Project Row Houses in 2019.⁹³ The National Endowment for the Arts Our Town program gave a grant to PRH for fiscal year 2021 in the amount of \$100,000 to support artist residencies focused on financial literacy and career counseling.⁹⁴ PRH received \$50,000 from the Houston Texans (a football team) Inspire Change Grant Fund to install heating and air conditioning to the exhibition houses, so that they can be used year-round.⁹⁵

| Project Row Houses | Donors* |
|--------------------|--|
| | BBVA Foundation; The Brown Foundation; James V. Derrick and Carrin Patman; John R. Eckel, Jr. Foundation; The Elkins Foundation; First Unitarian Universalist Church; The Ford Foundation ; Goethe Pop Up Houston, Greater Houston Community Foundation; The Jacob & Terese Hershey Foundation; Houston Endowment Inc.; Houck Family Foundation; Sis and Hasty Johnson; The Kinder Foundation ; The Kresge Foundation ; The Lewis Family Foundation; Local Initiative Support Corporation; John P. McGovern Foundation; the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation ; Mid-America Arts Alliance; MUFG Union Bank Foundation, National Endowment for the Arts ; Picnic; The Alice Kleberg Reynolds Foundation; Rockwell Fund; Mackenzie Scott and Dan Jewett; Silicon Valley Community Foundation; Stanley Black & Decker, Texas Commission on the Arts; 2020 Don Tyson Prize; The Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts ; Joan Hohlt & Roger Wich Foundation; and grants from the City of Houston through Houston Arts Alliance. via Project Row Houses- https://projectrowhouses.org/about/ |

Figure 23 Partial listing of Project Row Houses financial donors and support (as of 2023).

⁹³ Díaz , Carmen Graciela . “Singer Solange Knowles Will Donate \$100,000 Prize to Houston Charity.” Grantmakers in the Arts, December 12, 2019. <https://www.giarts.org/blog/carmen-graciela-diaz/singer-solange-knowles-will-donate-100000-prize-houston-charity>.

⁹⁴ National Endowment for the Arts FY21, FY20, FY19 Our Town Grantees <https://www.arts.gov/sites/default/files/Recent-Our-Town-Awards-5.17.22.pdf>

⁹⁵ PRH (@projectrowhouses) Instagram post, January 4, 2023- https://www.instagram.com/p/CnAz_pMpZ_/

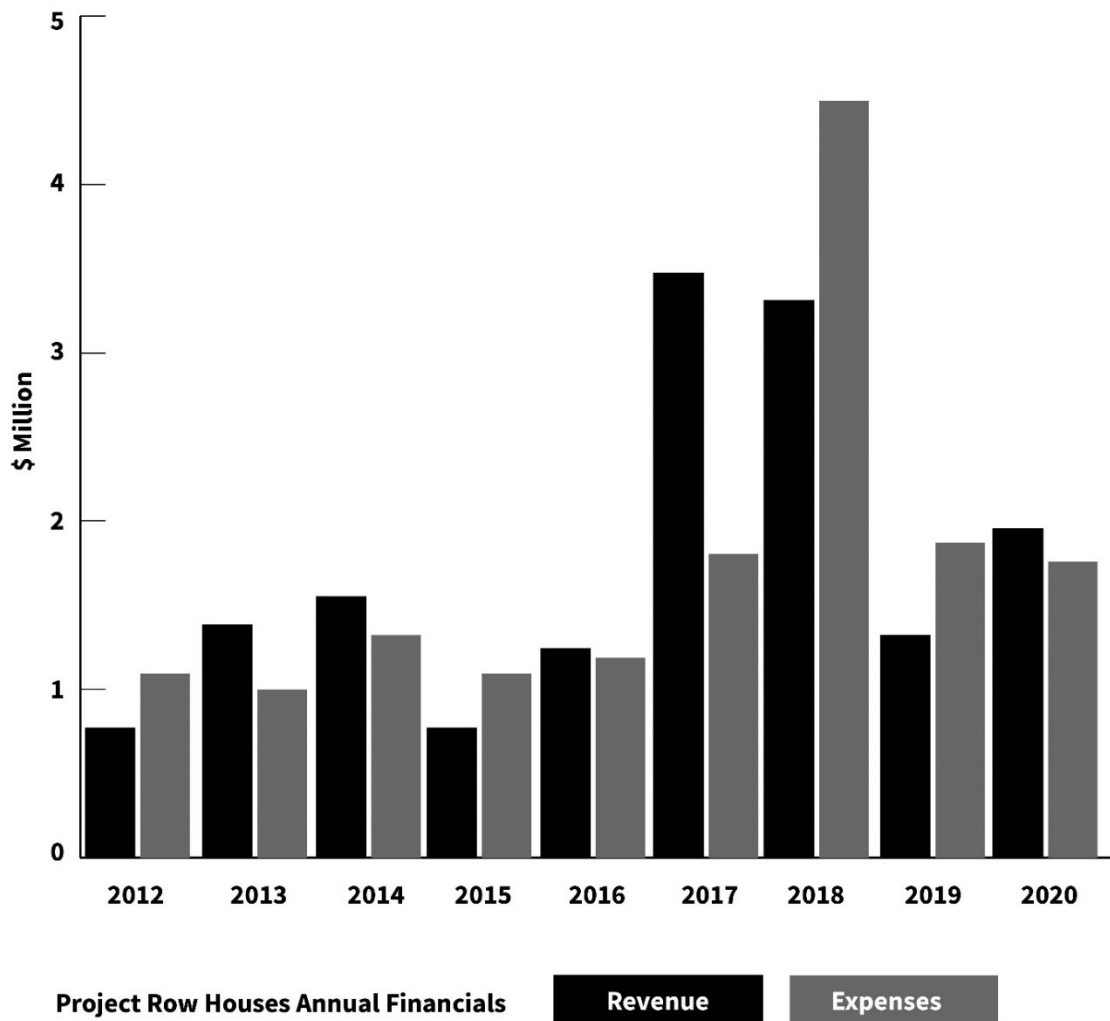


Figure 24 Project Row Houses Annual Revenue and Expenses Graph

| | Revenue | Expenses | Surplus/Loss |
|------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| 2011 | \$1,356,598 | \$877,583 | + \$479,015 |
| 2012 | \$771,293 | \$1,068,849 | - \$297,556 |
| 2013 | \$1,419,994 | \$1,087,866 | + \$332,128 |
| 2014 | \$1,557,798 | \$1,224,561 | + \$333,237 |
| 2015 | \$865,507 | \$1,190,495 | - \$324,988 |
| 2016 | \$1,218,298 | \$1,198,435 | + \$19,863 |
| 2017 | \$3,574,510 | \$1,745,667 | + \$1,828,843 |
| 2018 | \$3,337,816 | \$4,440,425 | - \$1,102,609 |
| 2019 | \$1,289,934 | \$1,878,259 | - \$588,325 |
| 2020 | \$1,954,244 | \$1,771,932 | + \$182,312 |

Project Row Houses Annual Financials Overview

All financial information for Project Row Houses derived from Pro Publica

Table 5 Project Row Houses Annual Revenue and Expenses⁹⁶

Project Row Houses has a three-part programming approach listed on their promotional materials that focuses on **Art, Community Enrichment, and Neighborhood Development** (Figure 25). discuss some activities of each approach to further describe organizational impact.

⁹⁶ ProPublica. Project Row Houses. <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/760411778>



Project Row Houses Three Part Programming Approach

Figure 25 Three Programming Pillars of Project Row Houses referred to as “Our Work”

ART

Project Row Houses has been engaged and impactful to numerous artists of color. Noted artist Angelbert Metoyer was a Third Ward resident and prodigy of Project Row Houses in 1994 at 17 years old. Angelbert was mentored by an artist in the early days of PRH and in 2020 his painting “Daughters of the Thunder” sold at Sotheby’s for over \$27,000.⁹⁷ PRH also attracted many established creatives and brought their work to the community. Famed landscape architect and artist Walter Hood had an installation exhibition at Project Row Houses in 2001,⁹⁸ and writer bell hooks was a part of artist Round 46 in 2017.⁹⁹ As of 2017 there were over 300 artists who have been involved with PRH including Simone Leigh and Julie Mehretu.¹⁰⁰

THE PUBLIC ART PROGRAM: EXHIBITS/ROUNDS AND RESIDENCIES

Beginning with the first Drive-By exhibition, PRH holds two artist rounds per year; these are semi-annual rounds where five homes are used for art exhibitions and installations. All of the rounds are curated by a certain theme; Round 47 was titled “The Act of Doing: Preserving, Revitalizing, and Protecting Third Ward,” curated by Ryan N Dennis or Round 53: The Curious Cast of Critical Race...Theory?, curated by Danielle Burns Wilson. Many artists from the Rounds choose to use their installations to highlight social issues like physical changes (gentrification) of the Third Ward (Figure 26), or the legislation over bodily autonomy. Summer Studios Residencies are another part of the art program. During the Summer Studios young artists enrolled at local colleges and universities transform a house into an exhibit or studio. The installation “Domestic Supply of Commodified Bodies” by Tony Rincon and Liz Hayes (Figure 27) , interrogates “the egregious inequalities that Black communities face when

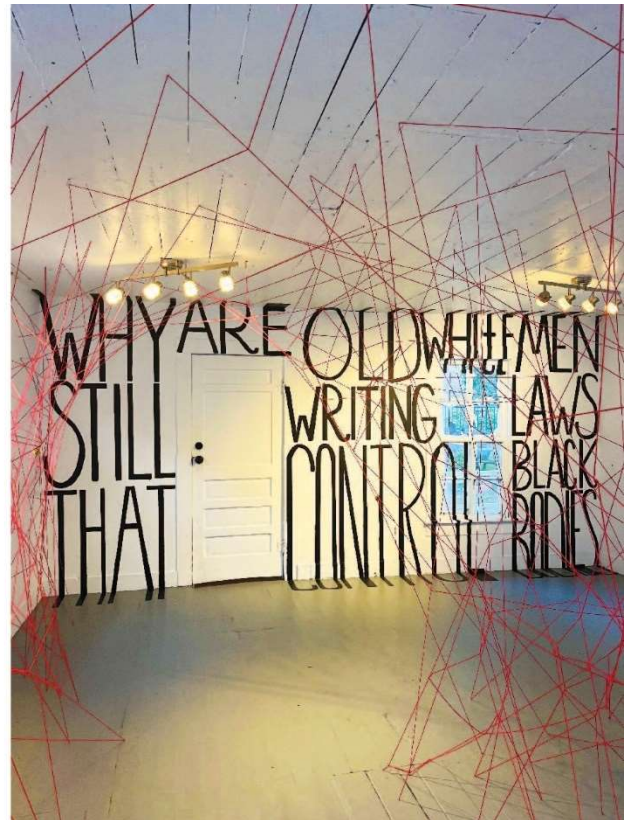
⁹⁷Sothebys.com. “Sothebys | Contemporary Art/Lot 567,” n.d. <https://www.sothebys.com/en/buy/auction/2020/contemporary-art/angelbert-metoyer-daughters-of-thunder-ancient>

⁹⁸ Hood Design Studio. “PROJECT ROW HOUSE,” n.d. <https://www.hooddesignstudio.com/rowhouse>.

⁹⁹ from the Project Row Houses, 2017-2018 Impact Report, 5

¹⁰⁰ Ibid, 6

it comes to matters regarding Reproductive Justice” with the red string in the piece symbolizing the barriers that women must navigate in this medical and legislative system.¹⁰¹ During its Round 54: Southern Survey Biennial PRH celebrated because the organization was able to give \$25,000 to round artist, Rehab El Sadek.¹⁰² In March of 2023, they were in their 55th series of Artist Rounds (some most likely were canceled due to the Coronavirus pandemic of 2020, which halted people from gathering until late 2021, in some cases 2022). In honor of their 30-year anniversary, the 55th Round was titled “Drive-By II” with artists exhibiting work on the exteriors of the houses.



(left) **Figure 26** Artist Unknown and (right) **Figure 27** Installation Tony Rincon & Liz Hayes. Photos by the author.

¹⁰¹ From an exhibit card, from the collection of Aisha Densmore-Bey, obtained during site visit, August 2022.

¹⁰² PRH (@projectrowhouses) Instagram, November 17, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CIFLm0jrg9y/>

ARTIST STUDIOS

Brian Ellison is an artist/photographer and Co-Founder of The Blackman Project with a studio at PRH. Artists in large cities often lack the resources to afford studio spaces. PRH offers affordable studios to artists in the community. Brian serves as Artist Creative Coach and is a resident of Project Row Houses. In my interview with him he discussed the impact of the Rounds on his career:

“Ryan Dennis, she gave me an opportunity that really changed the trajectory of my art. My capacity for what I thought I could create just changed. That Round happened (the Round he was able to participate in) and then I look up and I was at the Museum of Fine Arts Houston. They asked me to premiere my film short there {“A day in the Tre’: A young man's journey through his rapidly changing neighborhood.”}. Those opportunities happen because of the Ryan Dennis’ of the world and the PRH.”

COMMUNITY ENRICHMENT

In addition to art, community enrichment is one of the hallmark strategies of PRH. Anjeanette Gunter, Director of Community Enrichment Initiatives, as of 2022 has been at PRH for three years. The Community Enrichment initiatives are supported by the Financial Opportunity Center, a national program by the Local Initiative Support Corporation (LISC) launched in 2020. When Emancipation Park was renovated, there was also an outreach informing developers that the Third Ward was ripe for development. As Gunter states, even though they knew that “gentrification would be inevitable in the neighborhood”, the open call to developers accelerated its pace. The goal of the program was to combine efforts with affordable housing and create a program where “legacy residents”¹⁰³ (long-term residents of the neighborhood for at least 15 years) could remain in the neighborhood through financial coaching, career coaching, and assistance with public benefits, behavioral health and wellness programs. During the launch, PRH added legal assistance programs, food distributions through partnerships, donation drives, etc. These programs are to assist residents coming through the Financial Opportunity Center. The Financial Opportunity

¹⁰³ From Gunter Interview

Center has two main focuses: Artists/Creatives who are looking to start or expand their own business practices (Building Blocks of Creative Careers) and non-artists who are interested in traditional 9-5 employment (F.A.C.E). Reviewing a sampling of 31 social media posts some of PRH’s regular community programming include:

Financial, Artistic, Career, and Empowerment Program (F.A.C.E)

- Open Computer and Digital Literacy Labs
- Resume Writing virtual classes
- Estate Planning workshops
- Savings and Financial Literacy, Managing Debt, Basics of Investing, Borrowing Basics, Credit score and Reports, and Money Mindsets.
- Introduction to Grants for Artists and Creatives.

Building Blocks for Creative Careers

- Six sessions of “Ask an Art Lawyer”- Legal clinic for artists and creatives (April 27, 2022)
- Artists Mixers (Mentoring and Showcase Mixers)
- Artist Coaching



Figure 28 Artist Brian Ellison (left) and partners of The Blackman Project with the author at an Artists Mentorship Mixer at Project Row Houses. August 25, 2022. Image courtesy of PRH

Small Business Incubation

- **Small business incubation and meetups.** Project Row Houses established a creative business incubator program that has launched 8 small businesses in the Third Ward. Woman owned bakery Crumbville, TX, bookstore Kindred Stories, and vegan coffee bar Doshi House are past participants¹⁰⁴.
- **Emancipation Economic Development Council** (programs include Emancipation Avenue Main Street and small business training)

Community Support Services

- **Medication Misuse and Management Virtual Seminars for Seniors:** Learning about how medications mix, how to navigate a prescription routine, and risk factors that come with aging. (March 3, 2022)
- **Resources for Aging Care Workshop,** offering healthcare and financial assistance for people over 65. (February 3, 2022)
- **Managing Grief and Loss**
- **Introduction to Mental Healthcare workshops**
- **Behavioral health workshops with a licensed clinical social worker** (bi-weekly)
- **Introduction to Yoga**
- **Monthly Art Therapy Sessions**
- **Ask a Lawyer/Legal Aid workshops** (not affiliated with artist/creative services)
- **Urban Harvest Mobile Farmers Market,** a traveling market bringing locally grown fresh fruits and vegetables, stops at Project Row Houses every second Saturday of the month from 10am-1pm¹⁰⁵.
- **Free Grocery Distribution** (every two weeks) started in 2021, Target Food Hunger food distribution every Third Thursday, plus various pop-up grocery distributions.

Free grocery distribution is needed. The area where Project Row Houses sits is considered a food desert. A Google search showed the closest major grocery store from the center of PRH is

¹⁰⁴ Project Row Houses. "Business Incubations," n.d. <https://projectrowhouses.org/our-work/community-enrichment/business-incubations/>.

¹⁰⁵ urbanharvest.org + UHMFAM pamphlet collected on site, August 2022.

almost two miles away. Fifty-one point four percent of residents in the Rice University/Sankofa Institute 2019 Third Ward study were food insecure, compared to the national rate of 11.8% (Moore, et.al, 2019). Although in Harris County for 2022, the Zip Code 77004 (where Project Row Houses is located), the “need” index value is at 35.4 (out of 100), but the zip code includes some areas on the other side of the highway, and partially includes the museum district. The adjacent zip code of 77021 has a far more critical need index of 85.3 according to the Houston State of Health Food Insecurity Index¹⁰⁶. Although, upon closer inspection, the census tract that Project Row Houses sits in has a need index of 89.8. (This portion of the SocioNeeds Index® Suite, used data from marketing firm Claritas in 2022).

I observed two virtual health workshops, Building Conflict Resolution Skills (August 24, 2022) and Overcoming Childhood Trauma (August 31, 2022) and one Introduction to Grants for Artists and Creatives virtual workshop (December 6, 2022): The Intro to Grants workshop had four people in attendance. As an artist I deemed the workshop was useful, with in-session written exercises, and slides were distributed after the presentation. Attendance was small with just two participants for the virtual health workshops, but the information was informative. Three seminars are not a representative sample of attendance for these virtual seminars, and I was informed that attendance varies. I also learned from the Director of Community Initiatives that occasionally programs are requested by the community but not well attended.

In addition to in person and virtual programming there is a plethora of community services information on site. A booklet by Change Happens! (a community health based non-profit) and the University of Houston College of Medicine, created the 3rd Ward Health Resource Directory, which outlines women, youth, primary, mental, and specialized care and food resources, is also distributed on site of PRH (obtained booklet during site visit, August 2022).

¹⁰⁶ Houston Public Health Data Portal, “Houston Public Health Data Portal :: SocioNeeds Index® Suite :: SocioNeeds Index® Suite :: 2022 Food Insecurity Index,” www.houstonstateofhealth.com, n.d. <https://www.houstonstateofhealth.com/indexsuite/index/foodinsecurity?localeType=3&locale=38479>.

The booklet listed 53 sites for health and food assistance, including the S.H.A.P.E Center and Project Row Houses.

Regarding Behavioral Health assistance, PRH did view pertinent data to make sure that it provided what was needed in the area and who to partner with.¹⁰⁷ The first goal is to partner with organizations in the Third Ward to give as many local services to residents as possible, but also, if referrals must be made outside of what PRH can give, that external sources are accessible to the residents of the neighborhood. PRH focuses on the Greater Northern Third Ward, Zip Code 77004. A PRH funder¹⁰⁸ has access to data to measure the effectiveness of their programs. These include increases in net worth, improvement in credit rating, increases in employment, etc. with the Financial Opportunity Program with F.A.C.E and the Building Blocks of Creative Careers programs. PRH is working to develop additional metrics to understand the impact of the additional programs and services that they provide.

Many of the impacts of these programs are individual and anecdotal. Ms. Gunter told a story of a woman who came into the F.A.C.E program who was basically homeless and was continuously hospitalized because of mental distress due to her housing situation. PRH was able to refer her to a partner organization, so she was eventually able to receive stable housing. At the time of the interview, PRH didn't have metrics to measure those outcomes to track stabilization and was looking for ways to "better convey impact."

As stated earlier, sometimes the community will ask for things, and then they have not been well attended, like some computer classes, but she emphasized that PRH is always in conversation with the community to address what is needed. In 2022, there was a higher interest in literacy and tutoring in youth programming, believing that this push was pandemic related.

¹⁰⁷ It was not verified from where.

¹⁰⁸ Via Local Initiatives Support Corporation. <https://www.lisc.org/houston/about-us/our-partners/>

Liz Sholar, Community Enrichment Manager, primarily oversees the Building Blocks for Creative Careers program and community partnerships and works underneath Ms. Gunter. Ms. Sholar confirmed that there are some quantitative measures that they analyze for effectiveness, like attendance. Still, they very much rely on stories from individuals who have said, “This has helped me” or “This community partner did not answer my question, I needed this, but they didn’t have experience.”

NEIGHBORHOOD DYNAMICS (2022-2023)

From site observation, there are substantial economic disparities within the Third Ward based on housing typology and housing upkeep. One can traverse two blocks northeast from Project Row Houses to see houses in unimaginable disrepair adjacent to new construction for what can be perceived as more affluent families (Figure 29). However, someone can also travel two blocks southeast from Project Row Houses and find that the residences are more middle class, the lawns are manicured, and BMW SUVs can be seen pulling into driveways.



Figure 29 (left and right) New townhouse construction versus some existing residences and empty lots. Photos by the author.

There is lots of development from Elgin Street back towards highway 45, one mile to the north (refer to map in beginning of this chapter). There is a juxtaposition of new construction next to plots of single-family houses that have been torn down (Figure 29). Single lots originally would have one house, next to the same size lot that can have two to four units. I interviewed a planner with the city of Houston who discussed Houston's approach to development. "Houston does not have zoning regulations, but new development must abide by ordinances and state permitting and codes." The Land Assemblage Redevelopment Authority is part of a complex development landscape. The Land Assemblage Redevelopment Authority (LARA) agreement between the City of Houston, Houston Independent School Districts, and Harris County. The agreement was for the city to acquire vacant land that people had walked away from (average at that time was 18 years delinquent). The city would sell these tax delinquent sites at auction (for as little as cents on the dollar).¹⁰⁹ Any property that was not sold at auction would be used by the city and LARA to create housing. In the Third Ward (since it is close to downtown, the medical center, and close to universities) any vacant lots would be of high interest. As a result, there were bidding wars, and the price of land "skyrocketed", almost to the point where it is prohibitively expensive to build, especially affordable housing. Many vacant properties that remain in the Third Ward are because people are holding the land hoping to make substantial profits on flipping or selling the land. LARA eventually evolved into the Houston Land Bank. Its mission remains "to transform properties that have become community liabilities because their condition reduces the quality of life for neighbors and burden taxpayers to community assets that provide opportunities for affordable homeownership and amenities that support community needs."¹¹⁰ The program helps potential homebuyers qualify for affordable home programs to purchase newly constructed single-family homes and helps builders find lots so they may construct homes.

¹⁰⁹ One interviewee told me that some pieces of land were going for less than \$5000.

¹¹⁰ <https://houstonlandbank.org/>

Nonetheless, with all the new construction there is still an affordable housing shortage in the neighborhood. “There is a 10,000-housing unit deficit in the Third Ward,” says Libby Viera-Bland, Director of Neighborhood Development with PRH CDC. Ms. Viera-Bland was also a social practice fellow with PRH in 2018 (hosted between the University of Houston and Project Row Houses). She is project manager for future new construction and land acquisition and holds degrees in Architecture and City Planning.

Ms. Viera-Bland stated that many landlords in the neighborhood do not maintain their rental properties. This data is supported by the Rice U-Sankofa Institute report from 2019. The PRH Preservation arm purchased an entire block of homes built in 1930 by a former landlord who was not taking care of the properties, i.e. plumbing was not working and deteriorating floors. Naturally affordable housing (i.e. inexpensive private housing) is vital to neighborhood stability and cultural preservation. The organization felt it was essential to buy the properties and protect the residents so that they remain in the neighborhood. As with the Rice Building Workshop partnerships with PRH CDC are formed through informal relationships. PRH board members and Hines Real Estate helps to bring in pro-bono services for the CDC. After some research, I believe this is the same Hines Real Estate that is the Development Manager of The Ion District.¹¹¹ The development arm of PRH has been pretty inactive since the last PRH CDC structures were built around 2013. Ms. Viera-Bland commented that people tend to give money to Project Row Houses but don’t know about the sister organizations of PRH CDC and PRH Preservation, which is why the operations have been dormant for many years:

“It is very difficult to get funding. Many CDCs operate on a debt model; we are an extremely affordable housing organization. We don’t have the revenue to take in and run on a debt model where taking on loans is a viable option. PRH Preservation was able to purchase those homes because of foundation grants. The land where the duplexes were built was donated to PRH, and because of that donation, it was easier to receive other funding to get the houses built. So, there hasn’t been a sustainable model thus far to continue.”

¹¹¹ Hines. “The Ion.” Accessed July 25, 2023. <https://www.hines.com/properties/the-ion-houston>.

Finding funding continues to be a challenge. I was informed that PRH CDC and PRH Preservation were supposed to receive a five million community development block grant disaster recovery funding through the city of Houston and the state GLO, Texas General Land Office which would have resulted in the construction of over 14 new housing units. Because of administrative and political challenges between the GLO and the city of Houston, that funding (at the time of the interview) had not come in.

The CDC will go through a strategic planning process after years of being dormant, including long-term property management and the overall goals of the CDC. For example, do they want the residents to eventually stabilize so that they can become homeowners or move into market-rate housing? Will it be the long-term solution for some residents, explicitly aging residents who need to have a way to age in place? Some older residents have approached PRH CDC to purchase their homes so they may age in place without having to contend with a mortgage.¹¹²

Other neighborhood dynamics include the complex and (occasionally adversarial) relationships with large institutions like universities, otherwise known as the town-gown relationship. The connection between a community and a university can be tough, with the university being viewed as taking over an area or being an isolated ivory tower. Conversations with another local artist revealed some have slightly questioned Rick Lowe's role as faculty of the University of Houston (UH). Speculation exists that he has the current president, Renu Khator's, ear in terms of UH wanting to create a museum mile that starts at UH and includes PRH and then goes on to the main museums. Is Rick Lowe's relationship with UH "too cozy" since the UH is seen by many in the Third Ward as a gentrifying force? Is PRH's alliance with UH complicated because UH has knocked down some property in the Third Ward to build dorms and other buildings? I was informed that some residents have mixed feelings about the

¹¹² From Libby Viera-Bland Interview, August 24, 2022

University of Houston’s activities in the Third Ward. Feelings naturally vary. A staff member at PRH stated “Having a strong anchor in the community like a university is a net-positive”.

The University of Houston also launched the Third Ward Initiative with the tagline “Education. Empowerment. Growth.” The initiative’s goals include helping 25 businesses over five years, increasing clinical health care services and programs to address area health disparities, and increasing university and neighborhood association through art and culture, part of which is a program to establish 10 fellows to engage with Rick Lowe to learn about socially engaged art.¹¹³

IMPACT AND PERCEPTIONS

I spoke with a Houston-based urban planning faculty member and asked them about Project Row Houses’ impact on the Third Ward:

“It’s no question that PRH has certainly had a significant impact on its community. [In terms of public health impact] PRH has a level of legitimization, they are key players in the historic (or Northern) Third Ward. I believe they function in an organic way, as they have matured, they have been really involved in either spearheading or a part of collaborations that have attempted to improve the quality of life in the historic Third Ward... Through EEDC what has happened, PRH has been involved in trying to stymie evictions while historically they haven’t played a role in heavily influencing community development policy, through their collaborations through EEDC they established a neighborhood association. Houston is a city where renters have been treated like secondary citizens, in order to establish or maintain leadership in neighborhood associations you have to be a homeowner, that is a challenge because many of the people who live in the Northern Third Ward are lower-income and there’s a high level of people who do rent and the [area] did not have a homeowners association, and the city was saying they couldn’t have one. Through the EEDCs efforts many of the individuals who lived in PRH housing was a part of this effort to influence the city to change the rules so that a neighborhood association that is run by tenants could be officially sanctioned. I know they have been involved in neighborhood beautification and neighborhood cleanups. There was quite a bit of places in the northern Third Ward that have served as illegal dumping grounds. As a major player in EEDC, PRH was certainly involved in efforts to eliminate dumping in the Third Ward. Illegal dumping is more than an eyesore, it is a health hazard.

¹¹³ <https://uh.edu/third-ward/index.php>

The challenge for PRH is moving beyond art-based community development. In Houston we just don't have a history of community development activities. When PRH was founded many years ago, for the most part they were the only game in town and they worked in an informal way. They weren't pushing any policy levers... A lot of what PRH has accomplished is more programmatic and less policy. Policy is a major lever that helps to sustain change. I think that has been a major challenge for PRH over the years. But the question, is it realistic to expect them to do it?"



Figure 30 Rick Lowe at Project Row Houses. Photo courtesy John D. and Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation.

Brian Ellison, an artist working in PRH explained the feeling of community of those involved with the project including the artists-mentorship program (see Figure 28):

“Before I started officially working for PRH I was volunteering here. You just sit on the block, and you come across a lot of amazing people. It’s just a Mecca of amazing talent and community. A real, for real community.”

They went on to describe living in the community of PRH providing a fine-grained sense of the multiple social interactions that occur on the site.:

[Project Row Houses is the] Heartbeat that keeps the culture in the city of Houston, everything is impacted by the heart, PRH is that vital piece that helps the [art] community thrive in the city. Opening day of Rounds, I always remember having conversations where people would comment “I remember being 10 and coming here and doing art. I had Ms. So-and-so and she was my teacher here and it was the first time I did art. Or they talk about playing dominoes here on the block. All these things that can be referred to as activations, but they are just regular things that we do here...The beauty that hides in plain sight. That’s what Third Ward is.

I can’t remember what Round it was, but I remember sitting on the porch and seeing these two big buses pull up and loads and loads of people got off. I learned that it was people from across the world coming to experience PRH. To see what it is, see how it impacts the community, coming to learn! But also, being in awe with the artists, with what they saw. I sold one of my photos to the French Embassy because of that. Someone from the French Embassy was on one of those buses, and that was my first sale of my work. This model is so unique, so powerful, and so beautiful is that people want to study this so they can replicate it on their own.”

As of September 3, 2022, Brian Ellison and The Blackman Project started to host a series of group therapy sessions for African American men at his studio at Project Row Houses. Not part of the regular PRH programming but an extension of his art practice and support of his organization.

I interviewed a third artist and local professor who participated in work at PRH and had past and current students work at the organization. They taught career workshops at PRH and stated the following:

“I think it [PRH] has had a hugely positive impact, certainly on the neighborhood, a lot of people who grew up in Houston and get involved in PRH, I have conversations with them about how PRH is particularly great because someone who is a junior in undergrad can apply for their summer studios program and potentially get in, then list it as a residency. List it as an upcoming show and it’s not just a local accolade but because PRH has a national reach they get to interact with artists that come in the Rounds and meet international artists. They get access as a young emerging artist, and the name carries more weight and opens the doors for other opportunities... I really appreciate how PRH interacts with the Houston art scene in very positive

ways...because it is very well respected but very accessible to show there to BIPOC artists.”

When asked about the impact outside of the arts scene, they responded:

“They have really big public openings where they block off the streets and have art workshops and events for kids, they have a lot of local merchants where only people who are from the Third Ward can have stands, so they are bringing people all over the city, and which support the vendors.

In 2013, Project Row Houses hosted a weeklong “Social Practice. Social Justice” symposium at the Eldorado Ballroom to celebrate its 20th anniversary. This symposium included a conversation with Rick Lowe, Theaster Gates, and Mark Bradford (the same conversation discussed in this dissertation's introduction) (Dennis 2018). Coincidentally, 2013 was the year that Mark Bradford (and partners) established Art + Practice (Case Study c).

From the inception of PRH Rick Lowe states he was "not concerned with the art itself but with what it is supposed to do" (Goldberg 1995). Almost 20 years later, Lowe reflected on the collaborations that made model of PRH successful “For sure all the programs of Project Row Houses didn’t come from me. They came from inviting people who are really good at developing programs-giving them the space to be involved and see what the possibilities were.” (Finkelpearl 2013, 138)



Figure 31 Sam Durant, *We are the People*, 2003. Exhibition Round 19, Photo courtesy of Project Row Houses.

CONCLUSION

Project Row Houses has become the official landmark and representation of the Third Ward neighborhood. A photo of Project Row Houses is on the opening page of advertisements or reports by many Third Ward-based organizations. PRH has enriched the lives of the community of the Third Ward in tangible and intangible ways. Although the Third Ward has higher housing and food insecurity rates, and the median income is less than the city's, their presence has provided a sense of cultural identity and social cohesion. On the contrary, many residents would fare much worse if PRH was not there because of its multiple physical and

behavioral health services, financial literacy and legal assistance, food distribution programs, art education, and open and nurturing relationships with those in the community.

PRH has bolstered the community by helping people gain job training, establish businesses, resume their place in society after incarceration, or the long-term residents who have been able to stay in their homes. The aspect of strong social cohesion is evident. The Third Ward was a connected community before the establishment of Project Row Houses, and some could argue that PRH sustains and adds to those values; people make memories at PRH, start their artistic careers with the Rounds, and have started cottage industries and regulated businesses. In 30 years of an impressive tenure, what they were not able to do was resist the more prominent market forces that were and are taking over parts of the neighborhood. Of course, that was not the initial aim, it was to create an arts-based community engaged project. However, through the Emancipation Economic Development Council and the Emancipation Community Development Partnership, they have been able to be a powerful advocate for all Third Ward residents in how the area develops, affordable housing, cultural preservation, and indirectly influence policy through the mayor's office.

It's best to leave the last words to one of the Magnificent Seven, "Brother Jesse" Lott. When asked if he was excited about Project Row Houses future and on him turning 80 the day after the El Dorado Grand Ballroom reopens after years of restoration, Jesse Lott said "Oh yeah, I'm excited about the future. It would be nice to be here." Eureka Gilkey asked what he wants to see as part of the future of Project Row Houses. He replied, "What I would like to see is the [establishing] of a banking system so that any child in the first grade would be given a bank account. Every child that walks through the door should get a bank account. Then we would really be doing something like revolution." Finally, when asked about what he would say to the cultural workers continuing to work at Project Row Houses. "Keep up the good work. And keep expanding." PRH, via their Instagram social media account shared the news of Brother Jesse's passing on July 24, 2023.

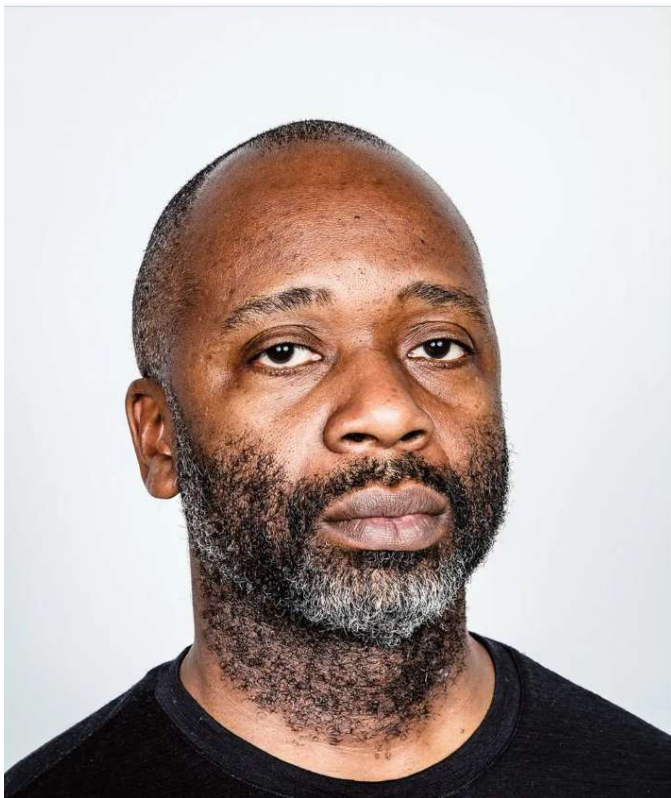


Figure 32 Theaster Gates. Photograph by Stefan Ruiz.

Case study b: Theaster Gates + Rebuild Foundation Chicago, IL

"There's no doubt in my mind that art has the capacity to do things that other mechanisms of transformation can't do." - Theaster Gates¹¹⁴

"Black people matter, Black spaces matter, and Black objects matter" - The Rebuild Foundation.



Figure 33 The Stony Island Arts Bank. Photographer: Tom Hall. Courtesy of The Rebuild Foundation.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

Artist Theaster Gates informally began his neighborhood revitalization efforts in 2006 by purchasing and renovating two properties in his neighborhood in the Grand Crossing area of Chicago. Since officially establishing the Rebuild Foundation, the organization has renovated

¹¹⁴ YouTube. "Theaster Gates Explores the Politics of the African American Experience | Brilliant Ideas Ep. 14," (Bloomberg Originals 2016)

dozens of properties in and outside Chicago. Multiple art media outlets and awards have celebrated the Rebuild Foundation and Theaster Gates. Rebuild receives substantial support from small and national charities alike and even support from pop stars. The MacArthur Foundation gave the Rebuild Foundation a \$200,000 grant in 2021¹¹⁵ and Rebuild continues to receive support from them. The Dorchester Projects (Gates' first renovation projects) was the inaugural winner of the Vera List Prize for Art and Politics from the Parsons School of Design at The New School in 2013. The Dorchester Projects was also the subject of the accompanying book titled *Entry Points: The Vera List Center Field Guide on Art and Social Justice, No. 1* (Kuoni and Haines 2015), published by Duke University Press. Through the Rebuild Foundation and as the founder of Arts + Public Life through the University of Chicago, Gates has supported Black and Brown creatives through arts incubators, entrepreneurship programs, retreats, experimental labs, and exhibitions.

CHICAGO

During 2008, the year Dorchester Projects were being completed, the United States was amid the global Great Recession. From 2007-2009 the economy took a nosedive and was the longest in duration since World War II. The national unemployment rate went from 5% at the beginning of the downturn and continued to rise to 10% at the end of 2009, and home prices fell drastically from the rates at their peak in 2006.¹¹⁶ The U.S. Dollar index value (its value compared to other international currency like the Euro or Japanese Yen) reached its lowest point in 2008.¹¹⁷ That same year, Barack H. Obama, a senator and community activist based out of Chicago, became the 44th President of the United States.

¹¹⁵ [www.macfound.org](https://www.macfound.org/grantee/rebuild-foundation-nfp-10115526/). "Rebuild Foundation NFP - MacArthur Foundation," n.d.

<https://www.macfound.org/grantee/rebuild-foundation-nfp-10115526/>

¹¹⁶ Rich, Robert. "The Great Recession | Federal Reserve History." www.federalreservehistory.org. Federal Reserve History, November 22, 2013. <https://www.federalreservehistory.org/essays/great-recession-of-200709>.

¹¹⁷ Ibid.

As of 2022, Chicago is like Houston as it is experiencing an increase in huge construction projects post the 2020 pandemic. There are two large scale multi-billion-dollar real estate developments, The 52-acre Lincoln Yards¹¹⁸ mixed-use project on the north side of the city and “The 78”¹¹⁹ adjacent to the ethnic enclaves of Chinatown, Little Italy, the Pilsen, and Bronzeville.

Regrettably, these massive construction projects equipped with affordable housing and thousands of job openings do not eliminate the glaring disparities present. The stratification of income and inequity in the city of Chicago has increased since the 1970s. In Chicago, most high-income earners live to the north, while many very low-income earners live to the south and west.¹²⁰

Chicago has also experienced a large departure of African Americans since the early 2000s.¹²¹ Chicago was the first city to publicize a recovery plan after the economic crisis of the pandemic of 2020.¹²² As of October 2022, the unemployment rate for Chicago, 4.9%, was higher than the national average of 3.8%.¹²³ One of the Chicago areas with disproportionately high unemployment (at 13.6% in 2022) is Grand Crossing,¹²⁴ the site of most of the Rebuild Foundation’s projects.

¹¹⁸ Chicago.gov. “Department of Planning and Development-Lincoln Yards”. n.d.

https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/dcd/supp_info/lincoln-yards.html

¹¹⁹ named “The 78” because the projects scale is so large it will become the 78th neighborhood in the city of Chicago. “Chicago’s Newest Neighborhood | the 78 Chicago,” 2020. <https://www.78chicago.com/>.

¹²⁰ Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement, University of Illinois Chicago. “Chicago Communities | Nathalie P. Voorhees Center for Neighborhood and Community Improvement | University of Illinois Chicago,” n.d. https://voorheescenter.uic.edu/chicago_communities/.

¹²¹ Vasilogambros, Matt. “Why Is Illinois Hemorrhaging Residents?” pew.org, June 19, 2019.

<https://www.pewtrusts.org/en/research-and-analysis/blogs/stateline/2019/06/19/why-is-illinois-hemorrhaging-residents>.

¹²² World Business Chicago. “Chicago’s Economic Development Agency.” <https://worldbusinesschicago.com/>.

¹²³ U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics. https://www.bls.gov/regions/midwest/summary/blsummary_chicago.pdf

¹²⁴ World Business Chicago. “ECONOMIC DASHBOARD,” October 14, 2022.

<https://worldbusinesschicago.com/app/uploads/2022/10/Dashboard-v87.3.pdf>.

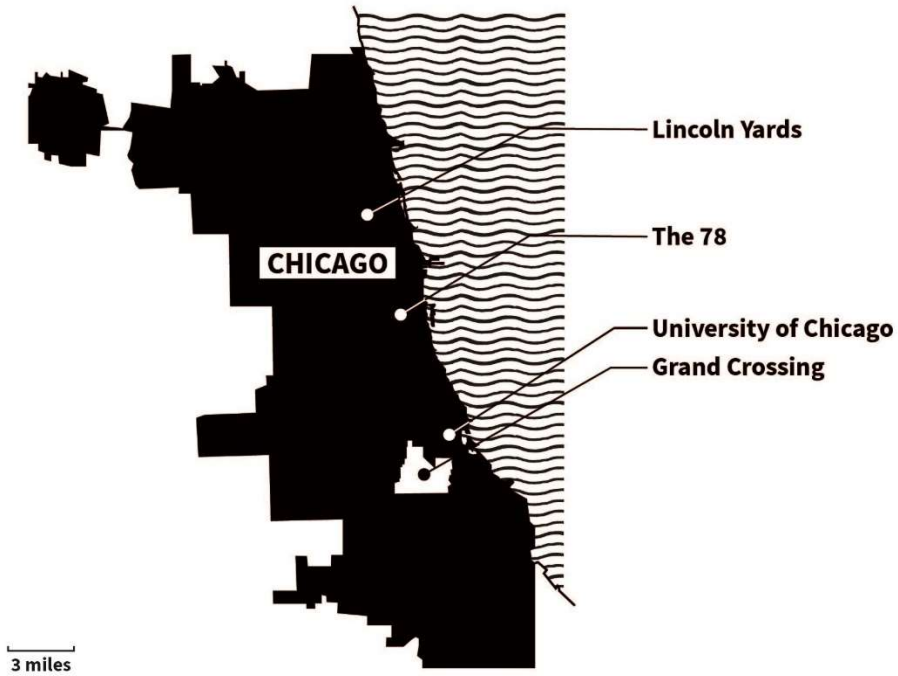


Figure 34 Diagram of the City of Chicago and the location of the Grand Crossing neighborhood

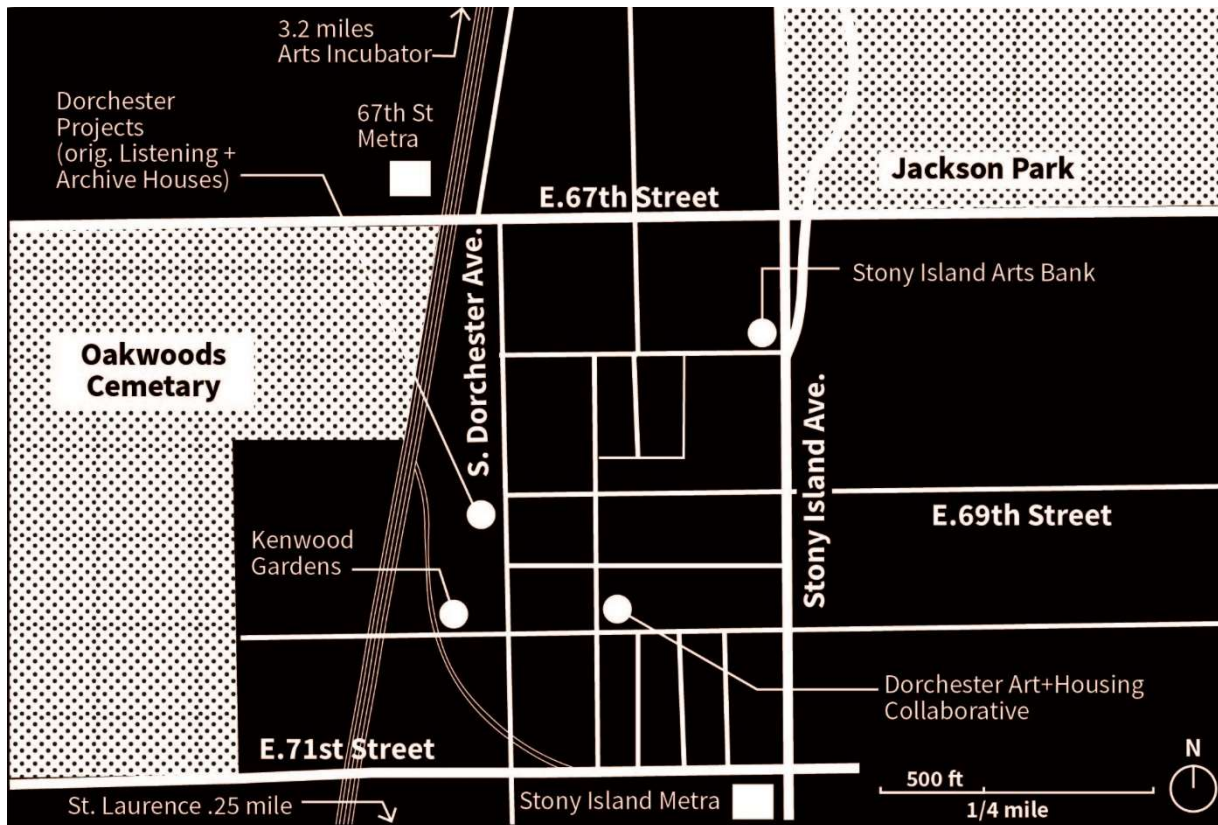


Figure 35 The Grand Crossing neighborhood with the locations of early Rebuild projects

GRAND CROSSING NEIGHBORHOOD AND THE SOUTH SIDE

Grand Crossing is approximately eight miles from Chicago’s famous Loop and is considered the 69th city neighborhood. Like many neighborhoods, it experienced a change in demographics during the 1950s. Grand Crossing began as an Irish and German neighborhood, classified as 99% White in the 1930s.¹²⁵ and evolved to a predominantly African American one less than 30 years later. In the 1950s the African American population in Grand Crossing increased from 6 to over 80 percent.¹²⁶ Racially restrictive covenants beginning during the Great Migration segregated the city, and it remains significantly segregated.¹²⁷

Despite the area being segregated there was a thriving arts scene. During the 1960s and 70s, during the height of the Black Power Movement, there were at least 35 dedicated spaces in the South Side for Black art, freedom, and cultural expression (Zorach and Baker 2018). This included institutions like the Afro Arts Theater, the Wall of Respect, South Side Community Arts Center, and the Du Sable Museum.

Theaster Gate’s Rebuild Foundation’s key projects in Grand Crossing are located in an area listed by the Urban Displacement Project at UC Berkeley as mostly Black, Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement, and an Opportunity Zone.¹²⁸ The majority of annual household incomes from 2016-2020 were below \$25,000 with a neighborhood median of \$30,110; the neighborhood unemployment rate was over 19% .¹²⁹ Chicago’s overall unemployment rate was just over 8%¹³⁰ with a median household income from 2017-2021 of

¹²⁵ Chicago Historical Society. “Greater Grand Crossing.” [www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org](http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/547.html), 2005. <http://www.encyclopedia.chicagohistory.org/pages/547.html>.

¹²⁶ *ibid*

¹²⁷ www.digitalchicagohistory.org. “Restrictive Covenants · Racial Restriction and Housing Discrimination in the Chicagoland Area · Digital Chicago,” n.d. http://www.digitalchicagohistory.org/exhibits/show/restricted-chicago/restrictive_covenants.

¹²⁸ Urban Displacement Project at UC Berkeley: urbandisplacement.org

¹²⁹ Chicago Metropolitan Agency for Planning. Greater Grand Crossing Community Data Snapshot Chicago Community Area Series. July 2022. <https://www.cmap.illinois.gov/documents/10180/126764/Greater+Grand+Crossing.pdf>

¹³⁰ *ibid*.

\$65,781.¹³¹ It is promising to see unemployment rates have gone down in Grand Crossing and across the city in 2022 (review the previous "Chicago" section), which should be positive sign for the local economy and job market.

Grand Crossing is part of a new program geared toward economic development and infrastructure investment called INVEST South/West Initiative by recent past mayor Lori Lightfoot. INVEST South/West outlines strategies for improving ten South and West neighborhoods (in phase one) by investing in community partnerships and small businesses, improving access to mass transit, improving storefronts and businesses on major corridors, increasing public amenities like public art and public spaces, and allocating more resources to existing neighborhood services and anchors.¹³² Two of the six primary goals for the INVEST South/West community meeting listed in the Spring of 2020 report (pre-2020 pandemic) for the South Shore were new uses for vacant buildings and more venues for art and live music.¹³³

A high-ranking planning official for the City of Chicago spoke about the Invest Southwest Program and arts development in Grand Crossing:

“[What is] happening planning wise...is a study along Stony Island Corridor, that we are just getting started with that, but it sort of a cultural district plan... so you have the North on Stony Island the future Obama Presidential Center, you go a little bit further down and you get to the Stony Island Arts Bank, you go a little bit further down you get to the Avalon Regal Theater building and there is a couple of developments like the Regal Mile Studios project that a group of, I believe, Black owned partnerships creating a film studio in the neighborhood. Common (the rapper/actor) was involved with a school called Art in Motion which is open and activated in the area as well, so there's a couple of nodes happening around there, so we are commissioned to plan along that entire corridor to start to understand what the opportunities are, and the city has one or two big sites along Stony Island so how can we leverage those to make something happen in the area is key to the overall strategy.”

¹³¹ United States Census Bureau. "QuickFacts: Chicago City, Illinois." Census Bureau QuickFacts. United States Census Bureau, 2018.

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/chicagocityillinois>

¹³² 200125_INVESTSW_SUMMARY_CommunityKickoff_SE_Final.pdf

¹³³ https://www.chicago.gov/content/dam/city/depts/dcd/general/invest_sw/south_shore/south_shore_kickoff_summary.pdf

Lastly, Pro-golfer Tiger Woods is creating a golf course in the south end of Jackson Park, if it can get through the environmental and legal hurdles.¹³⁴

THEASTER GATES, THE ARTIST, AND THE INSPIRATION FOR THE REBUILD FOUNDATION



Figure 35 Theaster Gates at the National Gallery of Art in front of his work *A Game of My Own*, 2017. Wood, paint, Black stain, Alabama ball clay. Photo by Gabriella Demczuk for The New York Times.

¹³⁴ Chivers, Matt. "Tiger Woods Course Redesign in Jeopardy due to Environmental Concerns | GolfMagic." [www.golfmagic.com](https://www.golfmagic.com/golf-news/tiger-woods-course-redesign-jeopardy-due-environmental-concerns), March 22, 2022. <https://www.golfmagic.com/golf-news/tiger-woods-course-redesign-jeopardy-due-environmental-concerns>.

Theaster Gates is known as a polymath. Born in Chicago, Gates credits his early experiences with the Black church as his first creative outlet.¹³⁵ He studied urban planning and ceramics at Iowa State University and religious studies and fine arts at the University of Cape Town (see Analysis section for artists overview table). Prior to becoming a full-time artist, Gates spent much of his career with “urban planning first, and then as the 'Art Guy' in the urban planning department, or the transportation planning department” (Hartt 2010. 78). He worked with the Chicago Transit Authority as an arts planner¹³⁶, strategizing art integration into mass public transit.¹³⁷ He began working with The University of Chicago in 2006. Gates has been described as a cultural catalyst (Lasser 2013):

“Theaster Gates, Jr, is a Chicago-based artist who’s wide-ranging artistic practice includes space development, object making, performance, and critical engagement with many publics. Gates transforms spaces, institutions, traditions, and perceptions.”

Gates’ artwork varies widely and includes using clay and ceramics (Figure 36), repurposing firehoses¹³⁸ and wood (Figures 37 and 38), making sculpture, and painting with tar paper and bitumen (his father was a roofer). He is also a performance artist, part of a vocal band called “The Black Monks”; formerly named “The Black Monks of Mississippi” which performed as part of the 2010 Whitney Biennial. He partnered in the design of the Black Serpentine Pavilion at London's Kensington Gardens in 2022 with David Adjaye Associates.

Thelma Golden, Director and Chief Curator at the Studio Museum in Harlem, discussed Gates work in the context of identity and place. “A lot of Theaster’s artistic practice is thinking about space. And very specifically, it is thinking about what is the potential of Black space?”

¹³⁵ Art21. “Theaster Gates,” n.d. <https://art21.org/artist/theaster-gates/>.

¹³⁶ Austen, Ben. “Chicago’s Opportunity Artist.” *The New York Times*, December 20, 2013, sec. Magazine. https://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/22/magazine/chicagos-opportunity-artist.html?_r=1.

¹³⁷ Hartt, David. “The Dorchester Project: An Interview with Theaster Gates.” *Chicago Art Journal*. 20 (2010): 72-88.

¹³⁸ A symbol of the firehoses that were used on African Americans during the civil rights movement.

How is it defined? What are the qualities that make a space inherently and intrinsically Black?”¹³⁹



Figure 36 Installation view from *Black Vessel*, October 10, 2020–January 23, 2021, 555 West 24th Street, New York. Artwork © Theaster Gates. Photos: Rob McKeever. Courtesy Gagosian.

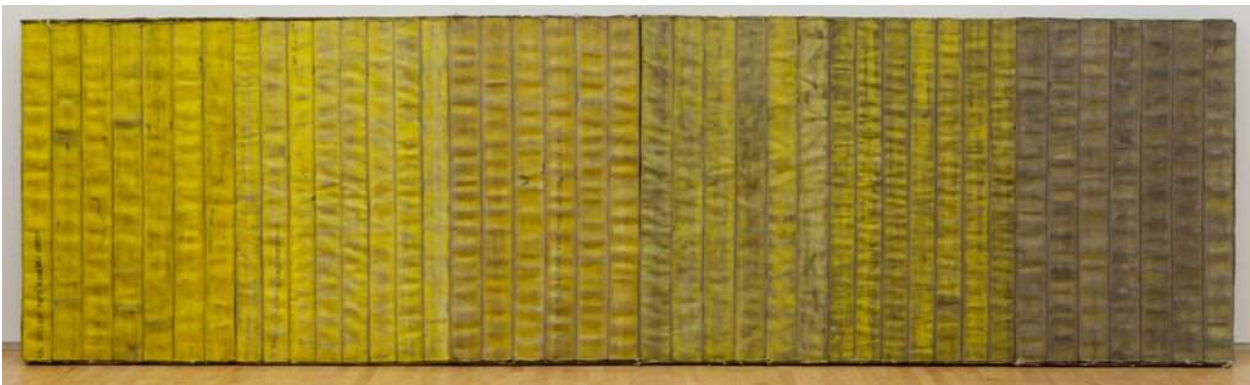


Figure 37 Theaster Gates. 2012. *Civil Tapestry 5*. assemblage (sculpture). Decommissioned fire hoses on oil cloth mounted on wood panel. 58 x 208 x 4 inches (147.32 x 528.32 x 10.16 cm) Place: Buffalo AKG Art Museum, Bequest of Arthur B. Michael, by exchange, 2014. Via ArtStor

¹³⁹ Youtube.com. “Nasher Prize 2018: Theaster Gates,” 2018. <https://youtu.be/tSdHdzg6nE4>. 12m:38s. Quote at 05m:22s-05m:41s.



Figure 38 Theaster Gates, *Mostly Straight American*, 2013, Wood and fire hose, 66 x 92 x 5 inches (167.6 x 233.7 x 12.7 cm), © Theaster Gates. Photo: Rob McKeever. Courtesy Gagosian.



(left) **Figure 39** One of 58 W.E.B Dubois hand drawn graphics depicting African American life in the late 19th Century (specifically from Georgia), mixing data and graphic design. Exhibited at the 1900 Paris Exposition. Image Public Domain via The Library of Congress. (right) **Figure 40** An illuminated art piece from Gates' Regen Projects exhibit (2017) seen at the Stony Island Arts Bank in 2022. Photo by the author.

Gates also creates artwork influenced by African American census/social issues (Figures 39 and 40). Gates' exhibit, "to be a poor race...", referencing W.E.B Dubois¹⁴⁰ "Souls of Black Folk", opened at the Regen Projects in Los Angeles, CA in 2017.¹⁴¹

At the University of Chicago, he is a professor in the Department of Visual Arts and is the head of an urban research initiative known as Place Lab, a partnership between Arts + Public Life and the U of C Harris School of Public Policy¹⁴² with support from the Knight Foundation¹⁴³. The Place Lab's aim is to "document and demonstrate urban ethical redevelopment strategies initiated through arts and culture."¹⁴⁴

Gates also is co-chair of fashion house Prada's Diversity and Inclusion Advisory Council with film director Ava DuVernay. He is on the board of trustees for the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden in Washington, D.C.¹⁴⁵

In 2018, Theaster Gates was awarded the J.C. Nichols Prize for Visionaries in Urban Development from the Urban Land Institute to recognize his work to create thriving and sustainable communities (Gose 2018). Theaster Gates has been a Harvard Loeb Fellow, won

¹⁴⁰ Green, Adam. "W. E. B. Du Bois' Hand-Drawn Infographics of African-American Life (1900)." The Public Domain Review, February 17, 2017. <https://publicdomainreview.org/collection/w-e-b-du-bois-hand-drawn-infographics-of-african-american-life-1900>.

¹⁴¹ Regenprojects.com. "Theaster Gates - Exhibitions - Regen Projects," n.d. <https://www.regenprojects.com/exhibitions/theaster-gates/press-release>.

¹⁴² harris.uchicago.edu. "Theaster Gates | the University of Chicago Harris School of Public Policy," n.d. <https://harris.uchicago.edu/directory/theaster-gates>.

¹⁴³ Philanthropy News Digest. "Knight Foundation Funds Arts-Based Community Revitalization Model," May 12, 2014. <https://philanthropynewsdigest.org/news/knight-foundation-funds-arts-based-community-revitalization-model>.

¹⁴⁴ ccrf.uchicago.edu. "Place Lab | College Center for Research and Fellowships | the University of Chicago," n.d. <https://ccrf.uchicago.edu/content/place-lab>.

¹⁴⁵ Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden | Smithsonian. "About Us," n.d. <https://hirshhorn.si.edu/about-us/>.

the 2018 \$100,000 Nasher Prize for Sculpture¹⁴⁶, and was named Chevalier de l'Ordre national de la Légion d'honneur by the French Ambassador to the United States.¹⁴⁷ He also was honored at the World Economic Forums' 26th Annual Crystal Award in Davos-Klosters in Switzerland for his leadership in creating sustainable communities (Chakraborty 2020). In 2022, Gates presented project titled “Afro Mingei”, a fusion experience that combines music, a café that serves Japanese and African American Soul Food, and his studio’s ceramics back at the Nasher Sculpture Center in Dallas, Texas.

Gates has consulted on or completed arts development and planning projects in mid-western urban cities like Gary, Indiana,¹⁴⁸ North Omaha, Nebraska,¹⁴⁹ Detroit, MI, and St. Louis, MO¹⁵⁰ and of course Chicago, IL. Gates and the Rebuild Foundation reports to have renovated more than 20 properties between 2009 and 2014.¹⁵¹

In response to a question by Carol Becker about art and reimagining and rethinking urbanism in the United States Gates remarked:

“Because of my training, the city is my medium. If the city is ill, then I have a subject, I have a patient. And that’s exciting. I started to think, how does my love of cities and my care for the built environment live alongside a rigorous life practice? What are the different stations of the practice? Those stations might include learning a lot about art and a little bit about real-estate law, governance of a city, developers and where money comes from, which means knowing a little bit about federal policy” (Becker et. al 2015. 17).

¹⁴⁶ Chow, Andrew R. “Theaster Gates Wins \$100,000 Nasher Prize for Sculpture.” *The New York Times*, September 20, 2017, sec. Arts. <https://www.nytimes.com/2017/09/19/arts/theaster-gates-nasher-prize-sculpture.html>.

¹⁴⁷ Gagosian. “Theaster Gates: Légion D’honneur,” June 5, 2020. <https://gagosian.com/news/2020/06/05/theaster-gates-honor-legion-d-honneur/>.

¹⁴⁸ Public Art Challenge. “ArtHouse: A Social Kitchen.” Bloomberg Philanthropies , n.d. <https://publicartchallenge.bloomberg.org/projects/arthouse-a-social-kitchen/>.

¹⁴⁹ Seelman Landscape Architecture, <https://www.seelman.land/public-art-research/theaster-gates-carver-bank>

¹⁵⁰ Wilmott, Francesca | Art21, “Creative Rebuild: Theaster Gates in Hyde Park, St. Louis“. Aug 1, 2011. <https://magazine.art21.org/2011/08/01/creative-rebuild-theaster-gates-in-hyde-park-st-louis/>

¹⁵¹ Creative Capital. “Theaster Gates’ Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative Offers Affordable Housing & Art Space in Chicago,” August 29, 2014. <https://creative-capital.org/2014/08/29/theaster-gates-dorchester-arthousing-collaborative-offers-affordable-housing-community-space-chicago/>.

WHY WAS THIS NEIGHBORHOOD CHOSEN FOR THE INTERVENTION?

Gates is a resident of the Grand Crossing neighborhood of Chicago:

“I live and work in Grand Crossing...When the Great Migration transformed the population from majority Irish and German to 90 percent Black, the area was left to rot. Someone decided that these streets were ruins, and I wondered whether I had the power to transform them” (Gates, et. al 2015. 48).

He continued that path, identifying more properties that he felt needed restoration and adaptation.

“As the price for Gates’s art object rose, it meant using the profits to fund the purchase of neighborhood buildings before they were torn down, and now that those prices have risen all the more, it means overtly scaling up object production for a hungry art market in order to generate revenue for Gate’s non-profit, the Rebuild Foundation... “I wanted people in my neighborhood to benefit from all of this cultural, physical activity that was happening around my art practice. If I was intentional about that, a new revenue stream would be a by-product of an art happening” (Kuoni and Haines 2015. 228).

ESTABLISHMENT, EARLY COLLABORATIONS, AND AWARDS

Gates creates art deeply rooted in African American culture; part of his practice includes creating spaces that celebrate and preserve that culture. In many ways he is upholding the pattern of multiple African American galleries and art institutions that peppered the South Side in the 60’s and 70s. The first purchase Gates made in Grand Crossing was a closed candy store. Two years later he acquired the house next door: “He renovated and reimagined them both, renaming the spaces Listening House and Archive House and installed several archived of music, art, and architecture¹⁵² that would have otherwise been discarded.” (Trummer 2017. 35). This became known as The Dorchester Project, later adding the Black Cinema House.

¹⁵² The collection included records from a shuttered store called Dr. Wax, plus the book inventory from Prairie Avenue Bookshop, and The University of Chicago’s glass lantern slides. Soon the news of this transformation started getting out, with articles in the New York Times. (In Grand Crossing, a House Becomes a Home for Art, 2011, <https://www.nytimes.com/2011/04/08/us/08cnculture.html>)

Rebuild Organizational Timeline

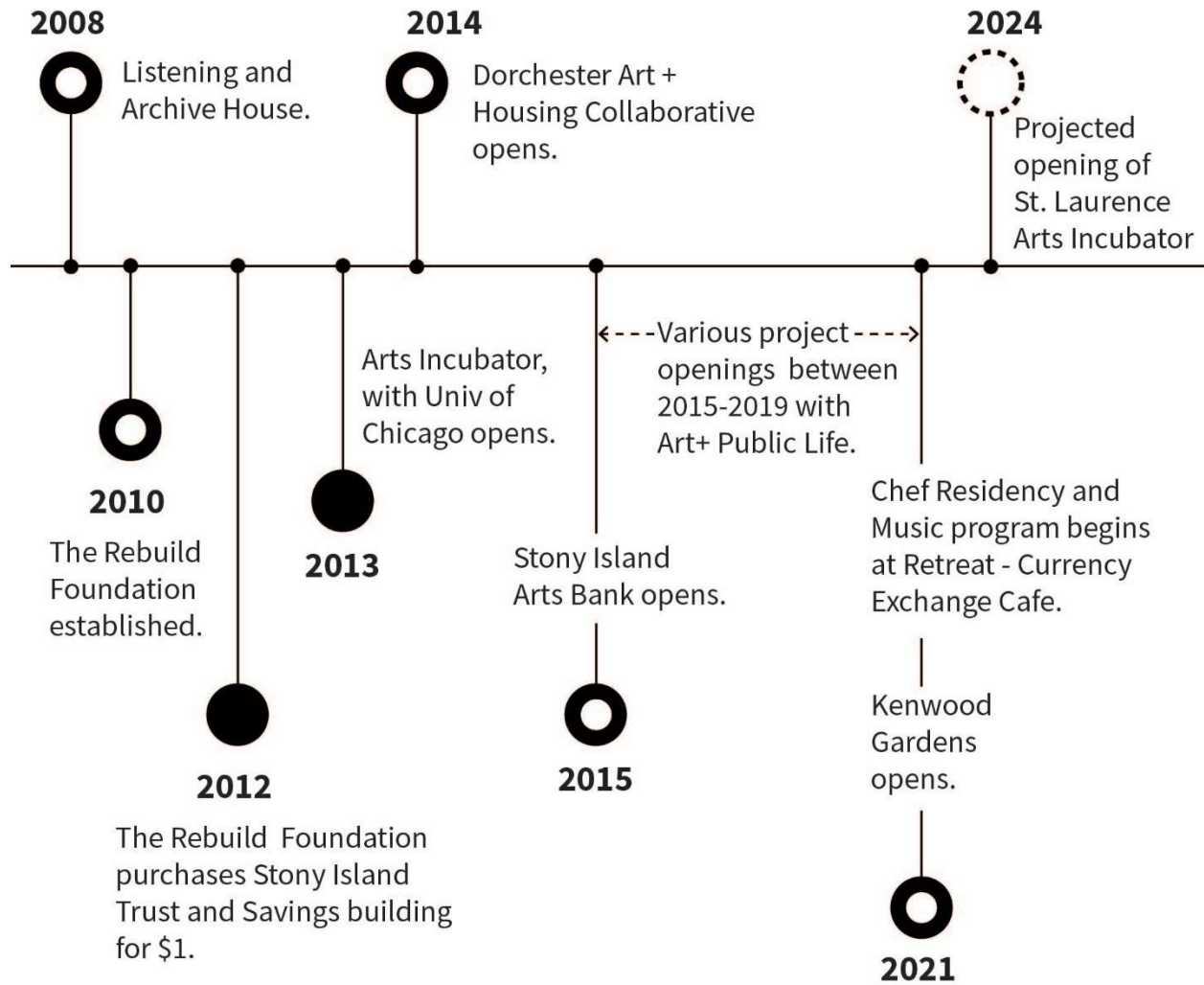


Figure 41 Rebuild Development and Organizational Timeline

The Rebuild Foundation was officially launched in 2010 (Trummer 2017), establishing business licenses under The Stony Group, LLC and The Rebuild Foundation Nfp.¹⁵³ As word spread about Rebuild, Gates would answer questions about his motivations to restore damaged properties:

“I might invest in these places because it feels like I’m supposed to. Regardless of the financial investment, I might just blow ahead, which is, in a sense, a certain kind of resource that I have that would not be available to a traditional developer. An unbelievable resource as a result of my unbelievable belief!” (Kuoni and Haines 2015. 201)

Next was The Stony Island Arts Bank. In 2012 Gates purchased the old, dilapidated Stony Island Trust and Savings Bank Building for one dollar from the city of Chicago during the Rahm Emanuel administration and transformed it into the Stony Island Arts Bank (recall Figure 33). The building’s basement had eight feet of standing water (from interview with Becker, Gates, et. al 2015) (Pre-renovation images Figures 42 and 43).

The project received a \$2.7 million dollar construction and rehabilitation loan from the Chicago Community Loan Fund.¹⁵⁴ Gates also sold 100 marble bank bonds inscribed with “In ART we trust” at \$5,000 each (Figure 44) at Art Basel (in Switzerland) (from interview with Becker, Gates, et. al 2015) and used the money to restore the bank. The original cost of the building renovation was to be 3.5 million dollars (Gates, et. al 2015).

¹⁵³ Chicago Data Portal - Chicago. “Business Licenses - Current Active | City of Chicago | Data Portal,” n.d. <https://data.cityofchicago.org/Community-Economic-Development/Business-Licenses-Current-Active/uupf-x98q/data>.

¹⁵⁴ cclfchicago.org. “Chicago Community Loan Fund Stony Island Arts Bank Opens as Part of Chicago’s Architectural Biennial,” January 8, 2016. <https://cclfchicago.org/news/about-us/stony-island-arts-bank-opens-as-part-of-chicagos-architectural-biennial/>.



Figure 42 The Stony Island Bank basement prior to renovations. Photo by Eric Allix Rogers.



Figure 43 The Stony Island Bank first floor prior to renovations. Photo by Eric Allix Rogers.



Figure 44 Theaster Gates, b. 1973, *BANK BOND* carved marble, 15.5 by 22.5 by 2.5 cm. 6¼ by 8⅞ by ⅞ in. Image courtesy of Theaster Gates Studio.

The Arts Bank was developed by Catapult Real Estate Solutions¹⁵⁵ and renovated by Fitzgerald Associates Architects.¹⁵⁶ The Stony Island Arts Bank is on the National Register of Historic Places (see in Appendix), as it is one of the only buildings that has remained from the 1920's when it was constructed. The Stony Island Arts Bank is now a cultural center that showcases art, movies, music, meeting spaces, a library (Figures 45-47), and the Johnson Publishing Company (JPC) Archive. The Johnson Publishing Company was founded in 1942 by John H. Johnson with a \$500 loan and began as the *Negro Digest*. In 1951, it created the weekly publication, *JET*. “During its peak from the 1960s until the early 2000s, Johnson Publishing Company was the largest Black-owned public company”.¹⁵⁷ *Ebony* and *Jet* could be found on practically every African American coffee table (including the author’s family home).

¹⁵⁵ “Catapult Real Estate Solutions,” n.d. <https://catapultrealestate.com/case-study/arts-bank-chicago/>.

¹⁵⁶ Fitzgerald Associates Architects. n.d. <https://www.fitzgeraldassociates.net/project/stony-island-arts-bank/>

¹⁵⁷ Johnson Publishing Company. n.d. <https://www.johnsonpublishing.com/>



Figure 45 Stony Island Bank first floor after renovation. Image via FitzGerald Architects.



Figure 46 Stony Island Bank meeting rooms before and after. Photo credits (left) Eric Allix Rogers and (right) the author.



Figure 47 Johnson Publishing Company Library at Stony Island Arts Bank Photo: Tom Hall. Image courtesy of The Rebuild Foundation.

The Stony Island Arts Bank opened in 2015 and is considered a connector from Jackson Park and the Obama Library to the major South Shore business corridors of East 75th and East 79th Streets.¹⁵⁸

Completed in 2014, Dorchester Art + Housing (DA+HC) was created from the redeveloped Dante Harper Townhouse Projects run by the Chicago Housing Authority (Figure 48). The architect of record was LBBA (Landon Bone Baker Architects)¹⁵⁹. Theaster Gates and Rebuild partnered with Brinshore Development LLC to bring the 32-unit project into fruition (Figures 49-50), using traditional mortgages, affordable housing program grants, and Hope VI

¹⁵⁸ City of Chicago, South Shore Corridor Study, May 21, 2020

¹⁵⁹ LBBA. n.d. <https://www.lbba.com/work/dorchester-arthousing-collaborative-2/>

funding.¹⁶⁰ Hope VI (six) is a United States housing and Urban Development action plan to eradicate severely distressed public housing and turn them into mixed-income developments. Chicago Housing Authority residents occupy 12 townhouses, subsidies permit affordable rents for 11 additional apartments, and 9 units rent at market rates. The project cost was \$11.8 million dollars.¹⁶¹ The project won the 2016 AIA/HUD Secretary's Award¹⁶² and an Urban Land Institute Vision Award in 2015.¹⁶³



Figure 48 Dante Harper Townhouse Projects prior to transformation to Dorchester Arts + Housing Collaborative. Photo by Eric Allix Rogers.

¹⁶⁰ Huduser.gov. HUD USER, Office of Policy development and Research, Case studies: Chicago, Illinois: Art, Housing, and Revitalization in the Greater Grand Crossing Neighborhood <https://www.huduser.gov/portal/casestudies/study-09212016.html>.

¹⁶¹ *ibid*

¹⁶² Category Two: Creating Community Connection Award. www.aia.org. "Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative - AIA," n.d. <https://www.aia.org/showcases/14671-dorchester-art-housing-collaborative>.

¹⁶³ LLBA Architects, June 12, 2015 "Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative Receives ULI Vision Award. <https://www.lbba.com/2015/06/lbba-receives-uli-vision-award-for-dorchester-art-housing-collaborative/>



Figure 49 The Dorchester Arts + Housing Collaborative housing. Photo ©2014 balloggphoto.com **Figure 50** Dorchester Arts + Housing community room. Photo by author.

The Arts Incubator in Washington Park, owned by and near the University of Chicago, opened in 2013. The historic two-story building, which had been lying abandoned for more than 20 years, was the first and only designated location for Arts + Public Life operations and programs since its completion.¹⁶⁴ The Arts + Public Life Arts incubator was voted “Best Space to Share Cultural Wealth” by community newspaper the South Side Weekly¹⁶⁵ In 2016, Gates started Dorchester Industries, an artists and crafts workforce training program for un- and under-employed creatives¹⁶⁶ that creates “furniture, objects, and spaces from overlooked materials from Chicago”.¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁴ Arts + Public Life. “Arts + Public Life | the Arts Incubator,” n.d. <https://artsandpubliclife.org/artsincubator>.

¹⁶⁵ Foreman, Jacqueline L. “Best of Washington Park 2021.” South Side Weekly, September 17, 2021. <https://southsideweekly.com/best-of-washington-park-2021/#best-place-f>

¹⁶⁶ Scher, Robin. “Theaster Gates Starts Artisan and Craft Workforce Training Program in Chicago”, Art News, November 1, 2016. <https://www.artnews.com/art-news/news/theaster-gates-starts-artisan-and-craft-workforce-training-program-in-chicago-7222/>

¹⁶⁷ <https://www.theastergates.com/project-items/dorchester-industries>

In 2019 Rebuild collaborated with the Chicago Transit Authority to create AESOP at 95th Street, a live music installation/DJ booth at the 95th/Dan Ryan Red Line CTA train station. Music and live performances are broadcast through the station via the station intercom system. The website claims “AESOP is the first known artist-designed and constructed broadcast studio/disc jockey (DJ) booth in a transit facility.”¹⁶⁸

In 2021, the Rebuild Foundation established a culinary artist in residence program at the Retreat at Currency Exchange Café, a food incubator and community entertainment space in the Arts Incubator building. The space allows chefs and food businesses that are not yet at the brick-and-mortar stage to test and grow their businesses, getting familiar with the community and testing their recipes. Retreat Café operates on a non-profit model. In 2023, Gates won recognition as a Food & Wine Game Changer from Food and Wine Magazine for the culinary artists-in-residence training program at Retreat at Currency Exchange Café¹⁶⁹ In that same year the last completed project by Rebuild, Kenwood Gardens, opened in 2021.¹⁷⁰ Kenwood Gardens was originally a brownfields site and covers 13 previously vacant lots in Grand Crossing. Rebuild, and Kenwood Gardens, are part of the Reimagining Civic Commons network.

The Rebuild Foundation is currently fundraising for a new project called the St. Laurence Arts Incubator. This project is located at 72nd and Dorchester in a former school that was closed in the early 2000s. The space is being repurposed by Rebuild to provide a living and creative

¹⁶⁸ CTA. “Keep on Movin’ to the Beat during Your Commute! Theaster Gates’ and CTA’s AESOP DJ Booth Is Back on Air at the 95th/Dan Ryan Red Line Station,” June 30, 2022. <https://www.transitchicago.com/keep-on-movin-to-the-beat-during-your-commute-theaster-gates-and-ctas-aesop-dj-booth-is-back-on-air-at-the-95thdan-ryan-red-line-station/>.

¹⁶⁹ Rebuild Foundation Instagram (@rebuild_foundation), June 5, 2023, <https://www.instagram.com/p/CtIJSYHMjef/>

¹⁷⁰ Daniels, Cheyanne M. “‘Kenwood Gardens and Artists’ Incubator Strive to Erase Stigma of Vacancy on South Side.’ 2021. <https://chicago.suntimes.com/news/2021/9/1/22652625/kenwood-gardens-st-laurence-school-arts-incubator-theaster-gates-greater-grand-crossing>.

space for artists. “Then, when we found out they were going to tear down the building, we thought this school could be the first moment where I could start to realize some of the other things I wished I had as an emerging artist. I could start to realize for other artists,” Gates said.¹⁷¹ Pop singer Harry Styles, a friend of Gates¹⁷², gave a large donation from his “Love on Tour” tour that was matched by the United Center Arena to support the St. Laurence building.

2022-2023 ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, PROGRAMMING, INCOME AND OPERATING BUDGET

The operations and the approach of the organization has evolved over time. Rebuild began with a staff and moved toward consultants as their staffing needs changed which included security, marketing, and communications. The Director of Communications in 2022 wrote promoting the Rebuild Foundation on publishing platform Medium:

While reflecting on the role of staff in recent years Rebuild Foundation has also intentionally moved to become a platform for mission-aligned individuals and organizations. We have found that by acting as a purposeful host we can be a larger catalyst for our neighborhood.”¹⁷³

One person I interviewed confirmed the changes in the organization over time, saying that they noticed a high turnover of staff. I looked for further confirmation with Rebuild Foundation annual reports of which I found just the 2019 year available. I was able to derive some information online about the organizational structure via LinkedIn and the 2019 annual report, but it wasn’t comprehensive. The organizational structure is listed in Figure 51. I was also informed during a site visit that Rebuild has a core group of volunteers that are residents of the neighborhood.¹⁷⁴

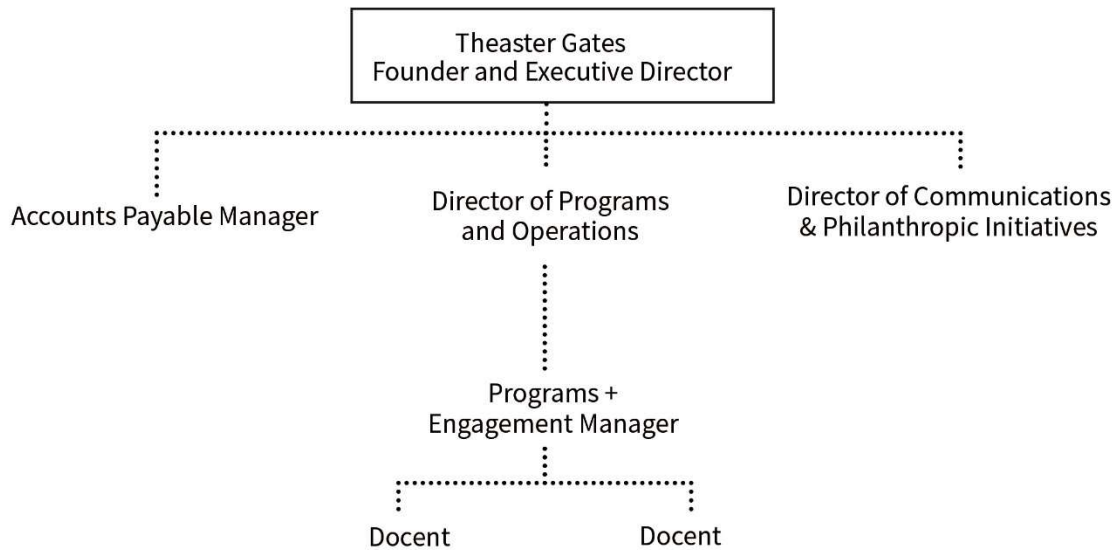
¹⁷¹ Citizen Newspapers. Chicago Chatham Southeast Newspaper, “Artist transforming shuttered school into creative incubator”, p.2. Week of Sept. 15, 2021 https://issuu.com/chicagocitizennewspapers/docs/ch_091521

¹⁷² Harry and Theaster’s friendship information was confirmed with a picture of Styles and Gates posing on Gates Instagram page dated November 29, 2022, and in the Phaidon article- “Theaster Gates harmonizes with Harry Styles”. <https://www.phaidon.com/agenda/art/articles/2018/july/31/theaster-gates-harmonizes-with-harry-styles/>

¹⁷³ <https://medium.com/reimagining-the-civic-commons/a-platform-for-community-how-chicagos-rebuild-foundation-moved-from-producer-to-host-for-a-2c8a8c2b273f>

¹⁷⁴ learned from Rebuild Staff during Rebuild site visits on October 7, 2022.

The Rebuild Foundation Organizational Chart



*Information derived from LinkedIn and 2019 Rebuild Foundation Annual Report. When shared with the Director of Communications, they shared that historically the Rebuild Foundation did not share names of staff members, but the chart above needed updating in terms of staff positions. I was unable to obtain staff information for 2022-2023.

Figure 51 Rebuild Foundation Organizational Chart

| | Revenue | Expenses | Surplus/Loss |
|-------------|-------------|-------------|---------------|
| 2016 | \$5,322,821 | \$392,867 | + \$4,929,954 |
| 2017 | \$45,500 | \$1,079,129 | - \$1,033,629 |
| 2018 | \$32,125 | \$1,182,238 | - \$1,150,113 |
| 2019 | \$3,717,827 | \$1,106,415 | + \$2,611,412 |
| 2020 | \$1,449,463 | \$1,259,125 | + \$190,338 |

Rebuild Foundation Annual Financials Overview

All financial information for the Rebuild Foundation derived from Pro Publica

Table 6 Rebuild Foundation Annual Revenue and Expenses¹⁷⁵

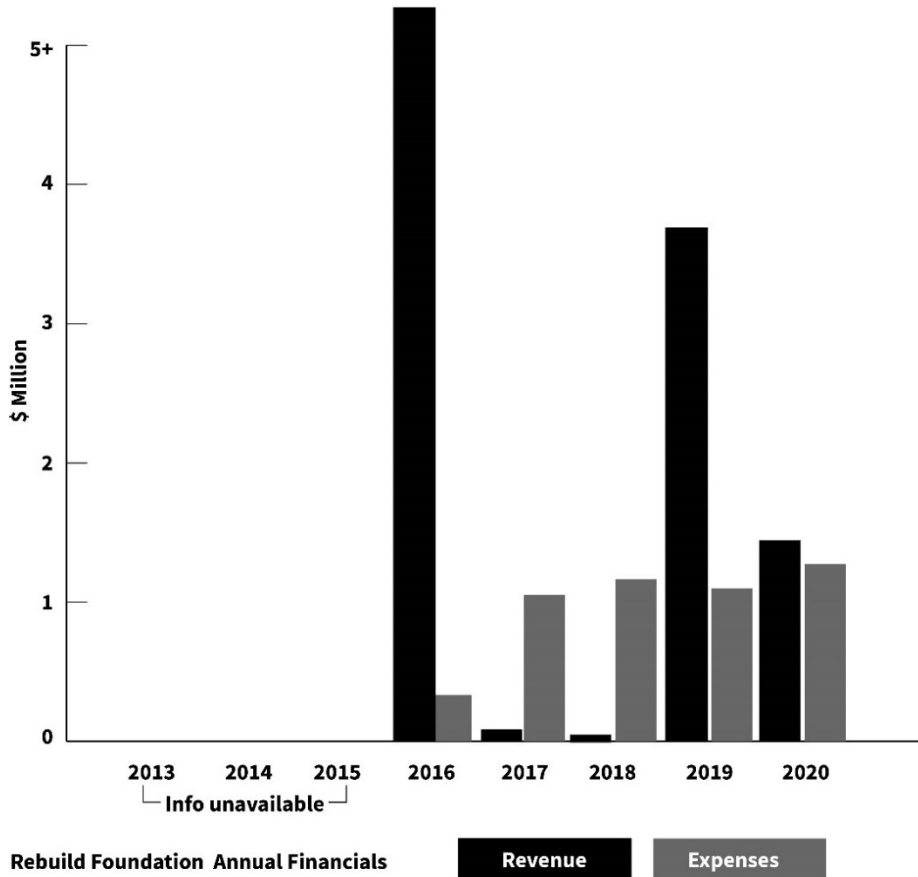


Figure 52 Rebuild Foundation Annual Financials 2016 - 2020.

PROGRAMMING AND FINANCIAL SUPPORT

In terms of revenue and budget, Rebuild has a healthy cadre of donors to support its programming. In 2019, Rebuild started the **Arts and Makers Community Business Academy** (CBA) through a partnership with Sunshine Enterprises¹⁷⁶ and the Coleman Foundation. The CBA is a twelve-week course that offers arts entrepreneurship training including business

¹⁷⁵ ProPublica. Rebuild Foundation. <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/271308845>

¹⁷⁶ Sunshine Enterprises is an entrepreneurship center who's mission is to create neighborhood and sector-based business hubs in Chicago's under-resourced neighborhoods.

planning and management. Rebuild also received a half million dollars from (RED) at Art Basel in which they created programming for communities that have been affected most by HIV/AIDS. This programming included workshops with the Chicago Women's AIDS project, The Frankie Knuckles Foundation (discussed later in this chapter), and The Center on Halstead (a Chicago LGBTQ social service agency). In 2019 they also continued their Chicago Dancemakers Forum and Dancer in Residence program. In that same year they emphasized their involvement with Reimagining the Civic Commons, a program highlighting five US cities who are reimagining the arts and public space. The Reimagining the Civic Commons program was funded by JPB Foundation, the Kresge Foundation, the Knight Foundation (which also funds Art +Public Life through the University of Chicago) and the Rockefeller Foundation.

At the same time, they received a \$1.6 million dollar grant from the City of Chicago's Neighborhood Opportunity Fund for the St. Laurence Arts Incubator Project. The Opportunity Fund gives financial support for construction to organizations and businesses in Chicago's South, West, and Southwest commercial corridors.¹⁷⁷ Authorized uses for the funds from NOF: (b) cultural establishments that provide, on a permanent or short-term (pop-up) basis, recreational and educational opportunities which complement and revitalize the areas in which they are located; and(c) incubation, mentoring, and training of small businesses that otherwise qualify as authorized uses under subsections (a) or (b).¹⁷⁸

Rebuild listed receiving a total of \$6,352,528 in revenue contributions in 2021.¹⁷⁹ Refer to Figure 53 for a partial list of donors.

¹⁷⁷datamade.us. "City of Chicago Neighborhood Opportunity Fund." City of Chicago Neighborhood Opportunity Fund, n.d. <https://neighborhoodopportunityfund.com>.

¹⁷⁸ From the CHICAGO ZONING ORDINANCE AND LAND USE ORDINANCE. Comprising Titles 16 & 17 of the Municipal Code of Chicago, and Zoning & Land Use-Related Tables

¹⁷⁹ Rebuild Foundation. "Rebuild Foundation's 2021 Impact." www.youtube.com, n.d. <https://youtu.be/7NcNqyaLsE0>

Under the partnership with Illinois Humanities, and supported by Rebuild Foundation in 2022, The Odyssey Project was a free nine-month program to study Art History, Writing, Literature, Philosophy, and Critical Thinking that allowed students to get up to eight college credits from the University of Illinois Chicago.¹⁸⁰

| | |
|-------------------------------|---|
| Rebuild Foundation | Donors* |
| | <p>The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, Illinois Office of Minority Economic Empowerment, Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity, Builder’s Initiative, Cadogan Tate, The JP Morgan Chase Foundation, The JPB Foundation, The Chicago Community Trust, The John S. and James L. Knight Foundation, The City of Chicago Neighborhood Opportunity Fund, The Kresge Foundation, League of Chicago Theaters, City of Chicago Department of Cultural Affairs and Special Events, The Miami Foundation, National Endowment for the Humanities, Enterprise Community Partners, The Prada Group, The Pritzker Traubert Foundation, The Fogelson Family Foundation, The Ford Foundation, Gaylord & Dorothy Donnelley Foundation, Rudin Family Foundations, San Francisco Foundation, Terra Foundation for American Art, Weasel Fund, and The William Penn foundation.</p> <p>via Rebuild Foundation’s 2021 Impact - YouTube Video https://youtu.be/7NCNqyaLsE0</p> |

Figure 53 Rebuild Foundation Donors from 2021

This program is for income eligible students who have had limited access to higher education. In addition to coursework, students have the opportunity to see plays, visit museums, and attend public lectures for free. The class of 2022 had 32 students, though there is no indication of if any of the students came from Grand Crossing or a direct connection with Rebuild¹⁸¹.

¹⁸⁰ The Rebuild Foundation Instagram (@rebuild_foundation), March 3, 2022.
<https://www.instagram.com/p/CapMfzdLcfj/>

¹⁸¹ www.ilhumanities.org. “The Odyssey Project/Proyecto Odisea – IL Humanities,” n.d.
<https://www.ilhumanities.org/program/the-odyssey-project/>

While not an exhaustive list, the 2022-2023 programming for Rebuild¹⁸² also includes: The launch of Dorchester Industries Experimental Design Lab (EDL) with fashion house Prada. Consisting of a cohort of 14 multigenerational emerging and established designers, the three-year pilot program gives entrée for Rebuild to support and highlight the work of Black and Brown designers as well as artists.

The Mellon Archives Innovations Program is another substantial funder. In 2022, Rebuild received a \$3.5 million dollar grant from the Mellon Foundation to create the Mellon Archival Innovation Program. The grant aided Rebuild to create four fellows: singer Corrine Bailey Rae, interdisciplinary artist Yaw Agyeman, composer Ben LaMar Gay, and dance scholar Dr. Honey Crawford. The grant will also activate the archives and collections (including the DJ Frankie Knuckles Collection¹⁸³ and the Johnson Publishing Company), to allow individual artists to use the collection or objects that move them to create new work. Eventually the archives will move to St. Laurence.

The Frankie Knuckles Foundation for LGBTQ Homelessness and Diabetes is a recognized 501c3 and focused on: music in schools, LGBTQ youth homelessness, AIDS research / prevention & diabetes research / education.¹⁸⁴ There is a Frankie Knuckles documentary in the works, and one of the aims of the Mellon Archives program was to actively digitize the collection, so the whole collection can be digitized for public engagement and to build programming around it. To honor Frankie Knuckles, every MLK holiday and on his birthday, the foundation partners with Rebuild and Brave Space Alliance to throw a fundraiser event to help with LGBT Community health.

¹⁸² all the following information was relayed by the Director of Communications of Rebuild Foundation, during our interview December 7, 2022.

¹⁸³ learned from Rebuild Staff during site visit on October 7, 2022.

¹⁸⁴ from The Frankie Knuckles Foundation. <http://www.thefkfoundation.org/>

In terms of organization expenses, Rebuild reported allocating \$221,000 to training, space, and support for entrepreneurs in 2021 at The Retreat at Currency Exchange Café which included 6 chefs' residencies in the incubator program and 30 public programs at Retreat. Rebuild expanded the Culinary Artists and Creative Entrepreneurs program into 2023. During 2023 they will also use support from the Mellon Archives Innovation Program to activate the Ebony Magazine cookbook (from the Johnson Publishing Company).

NEIGHBORHOOD DYNAMICS (2020-2023)

Greater Grand Crossing is majority African American, but the percentage dropped from 97.8% in 2000 to 95.6% in 2020. At the same time, it has increased slightly for those who identify as White from 0.4% to 0.9%¹⁸⁵. The Hispanic population grew from 0.7% to 2.0%. Because the combined percentage of African American and Hispanic population has remained very high it calls into question the claim of the area being susceptible to gentrification. Further confirming this the median income dropped from \$35,000 between 2006-2010 (\$35,257 in 2020 dollars) to \$30,000 (30,110) between 2016-2020.¹⁸⁶ Home ownership (Owner Occupied Units versus Renter Occupied Units) dropped over 4% (4.4%), while vacant units in the area increased 1.8% (from 19.3% to 21.1%).¹⁸⁷ The data would indicate that there is a very small demographic change in the area, but the population may be dropping as well as median incomes.

PERCEPTIONS AND IMPACT

The Rebuild Foundation was perceived by the community and other stakeholders as having strengths and weaknesses. Like any public figure, Gates has his detractors. In the Rebuild Foundation's earlier days, some employees alleged mistreatment and referred to the organization as disorganized, with some questioning if the work created by Rebuild really

¹⁸⁵ CMAP Community Data Snapshot Grand Crossing.

¹⁸⁶ *ibid*

¹⁸⁷ *ibid*

helps the Black residents of Chicago, all which Gates has addressed.¹⁸⁸ Marina Vishmidt, PhD, writer and critic concerned with art, labor, and value offered a critique of Theaster Gates, saying his built projects:

“amount to a sort of benign artist-run (rather than art-led) gentrification, empowering the artist himself as well as the community in question...In the case of Theaster Gates, it means that emblems of structural violence such as housing privatisation, unemployment, and White supremacy turn into resources for a cultural project which exposes them to the light, only to push them into the background as irrelevant in the face of the real, positive change partially bankrolled by the market and...entities systemically responsible for those very same ills” (Vishmidt 2013).

Vishmidt’s critique of Gates is the same expressed by Brynjolson regarding Gates and Lowe (Brynjolson 2019). The requirement of depending on donor organizations and institutional funding in order to have a larger impact on your neighborhood, or needing to scale in order to maximize impact is a consideration, when some of the funding comes from institutions who have historically done some of the harm. The conundrum is clear, stay small and independent but have minimal reach or be able to scale, and partner with some organizations that some outside your organization may feel are questionable. Some of the questions proposed by this dissertation have been asked before regarding the social impact of Theaster Gates real estate projects:

“If one element of Gates’ project is social impact, are there numbers that substantiate that impact? Do the residents of Dorchester Projects have an equity stake in the outcome of Gates’ work? Has he created jobs, lowered crime, reinforced social fabric, and increased the quality of life or standard of living” (Horowitz, 2013)?

One person who I interviewed was the executive director of a community organization on the South side of Chicago. They provided a general critique that there are certain anti-gentrification measures that Rebuild has not taken on the South Side because of their partnerships with the University of Chicago. I was told a group called Assata’s Daughters¹⁸⁹

¹⁸⁸ Christian Belanger and Mari Cohen, “Cracks in the Foundation:”, South Side Weekly, May 23, 2017. <https://southsideweekly.com/cracks-in-theaster-gates-rebuild-foundation/>

¹⁸⁹ Assata’s Daughters is a self-proclaimed “queer Black woman-led and youth-focused organization rooted in the Black Radical Tradition.” <https://www.assatasdaughters.org>

had been vocal in opposition to the Rebuild Foundation-University of Chicago expansion of real estate. I looked for documentation on these critiques on social media and elsewhere on the web to substantiate what I was told but found none. This person informed me the sentiment was "Rebuild hasn't gotten in the ring regarding the gentrification around the Obama Center. There is valuable vacant land across from the Obama Center, which should be used for affordable housing, but the University has other plans".¹⁹⁰ Other neighborhood organizations are trying to get benefits from the Obama Center and University partnerships. The Obama center equals a tremendous increase in property values and most likely increased rents, pricing some out who will be unable to find housing in the area. The Obama Center is in partnership with the University of Chicago. There was a Community Benefits Agreement proposed to the Obama Foundation and the City of Chicago that would prioritize the existing residents of the Woodlawn neighborhood (the Woodlawn neighborhood is directly adjacent and just north of Grand Crossing). Some items included in the proposed agreement were employment during the construction and opening of the Obama Center and anti-displacement housing measures including rent control and the stop of property tax hikes from the city.¹⁹¹ In February of 2023, residents from the Woodlawn and South Shore neighborhoods voted in an over 85% majority that two community benefits agreement referendums to address housing affordability and mitigate displacement near the future Obama Center.¹⁹² It should be noted that Theaster Gates was on the architect selection panel for the Obama Presidential Library.¹⁹³

¹⁹⁰ Interviewee kept anonymous by the author. Interview took place on July 11, 2022.

¹⁹¹ One initiative that has developed in response to the development around Jackson Park is the Woodlawn Housing Preservation Ordinance via Mayor Lori Lightfoot which has five main goals: Help protect existing residents from displacement, Create new rental and for-sale housing opportunities that are affordable to households at a range of incomes, Ensure that existing housing stock offers good quality housing for residents, Promote housing options to support equitable and inclusive income diversity in Woodlawn, Support economic development opportunities. https://www.chicago.gov/city/en/depts/doh/supp_info/woodlawn-housing-ordinance.html

¹⁹² Chicago Crusader Staff "South Shore and Woodlawn voters overwhelmingly call for city housing protections". The Chicago Crusader, March 10, 2023. <https://chicagocrusader.com/south-shore-and-woodlawn-voters-overwhelmingly-call-for-city-housing-protections/>

¹⁹³ <https://www.dnainfo.com/chicago/20160114/hyde-park/obama-library-design-panel-includes-theaster-gates-meryl-streeps-husband/>

Another casual interviewee stated they felt that Gates and Rebuild was in some ways a “trojan horse”¹⁹⁴ for the University of Chicago to come in and gain ownership of the neighborhood. This perspective is understandable, and the University of Chicago has a turbulent history with the African American residents in the South Side of Chicago. The university supported restrictive covenants in the 1930s’ and 40s.¹⁹⁵ Area residents put pressure on the University in the 1960s and as a result the University vowed not to expand below 61st street¹⁹⁶, in the upper section of the Woodlawn neighborhood of the city.

One interviewee spoke to me about what appeared to be a dissonance between some of the programs geared toward artists like The Black Artists Retreat (not a Rebuild Program, but an event at the Arts Bank that was initiated by Theaster Gates and Eliza Myrie in 2013)¹⁹⁷ and programming for “regular people”.¹⁹⁸ In the earlier days of Rebuild I was told some have questioned if the Arts Bank was really for the residents of Grand Crossing or for a specific type of visitor: “...It wasn’t about bringing these high-profile celebrity artists...at the Arts Bank there was this [celebration of art icons] that left out the people, the residents, who lived in the neighborhood.” (For further insight on the evolution of Rebuild and Theaster Gates mission and who they serve, refer to the Appendix for full quote from Director of Communications.)

In contrast, those who have positive perceptions of Rebuild are equally vocal. During the Covid-19 pandemic of 2020, the Rebuild Foundation worked with groups like Alt_ (Alt Space

¹⁹⁴ Informal interview on October 9, 2022. Interviewee kept anonymous by author.

¹⁹⁵ O’Brian, Katie. “It’s Complicated: The University of Chicago’s Relationship with Its Neighbors.” *NPR.org*, April 24, 2019. <https://www.npr.org/local/309/2019/04/24/716535585/it-s-complicated-the-university-of-chicago-s-relationship-with-its-neighbors>.

¹⁹⁶ Harris, Lee. “The University and the South Side.” *Chicago Maroon*, September 15, 2047. <https://chicagomaroon.com/24823/news/university-south-side/>.

¹⁹⁷ <https://www.theastergates.com/project-items/Black-artists-retreat-b-a-r>

¹⁹⁸ The Black Artist Retreat started as invitation only. It has always been small and always hosted in Chicago until 2019 when it was hosted in New York for the first time. It was at the Park Avenue Armory, while Gates had a residency or exhibit in NYC, then the next year in London for the first global retreat as he was closing down his Serpentine Pavilion.

Chicago) and the Chicago Neighborhood Network Alliance to provide food and supplies to neighborhood residents. As a result of these partnerships, Rebuild was able to supply food to more than 840 residents in one month when the local grocery store was damaged during the summer of 2020 (Voon, 2020). In addition, Rebuild holds a partnership with the K-12 school The South Shore Fine Arts Academy¹⁹⁹ directly across from Dorchester Arts + Housing Collaborative.¹⁹³

Val Free, is the Founder/CEO of The Neighborhood Network Alliance (NNA). The NNA has been in operation since 2010, under various names. The NNA's partnership with Rebuild was characterized as "really strong" prior and during the COVID pandemic. NNA would have monthly meetings at the Arts Bank, and it was a symbiotic relationship because in turn the NNA would distribute information about the goings on at the Arts Bank to their community members. During the pandemic the two entities partnered to distribute food and toiletries to people in the community :

"They (Rebuild) were a really good partner for that. Every Saturday for two months, we would have community members volunteer to deliver groceries and toiletries to community members inside the South Shore, sometimes outside the South Shore, but primarily in the South Shore. You would not realize how many people were suffering and probably still are just because of the lack that is out there, lack of resources, lack of everything."

There were health and wellness events catered to the community prior to the pandemic. Pre-pandemic there were wellness and dance classes at the Dorchester Arts and Housing Collaborative every day. During the pandemic of 2020, Dorchester Art + Houses held blood drives and food drives. They also partnered with The Center on Halsted and a few of its most vulnerable constituents are housed at Dorchester. This agreement offers some temporary housing for some unhoused queer youth in four of the multifamily apartments."²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁹ Rebuild staff relayed this information during site Visit on October 7, 2022.

²⁰⁰ Rebuild staff relayed this information during site Visit on October 7, 2022.

Stacey Patrice, a self-described transdisciplinary artist, plus yoga and spirituality practitioner, worked with the Rebuild Foundation from 2015-2021. She was one of the longest individual collaborators with Rebuild:” I kept that program going for five years every single week without fail.” The focus of her work was “about healing artistry and healing communities,” During the pandemic she offered wellness classes online. The classes focused on Satsang, which is the practice of talking and finding truth. The weekly virtual classes had an attendance of over 200 people, primarily African American women (Voon 2020).

When asked her how the relationship started with Rebuild and evolve over time:

“So there was a new building that was opening up that I wasn’t even aware of and it was a community center, as a matter of fact it was an arts center (the Dorchester Art + Housing community space), which was really powerful because I had completed my own thesis project inside of my teacher training making the connection between yoga and creativity. So, to land in an arts center, to have the majority of the people who came to do the practice be artists was like heaven sent.”

During her first month operating the classes she had 42 people every week in a space that was supposed to hold 25 people.

“To me it just proved that the need was there. I knew it was a yoga desert, but at this time it really wasn’t clear, because people were saying “Black people don’t do yoga!” So, I knew at that point that the yoga desert was now clear, it was un-parched (jokes), but I was also really clear that the space was really important, the space was beautiful...Beautiful! People came from the community, elders, children, multi-generational. It was beautiful.”

She spoke about one of the most surprising elements of her practice that I interpreted as an underpinning of Black space:

We were coming up on the fifth anniversary of me teaching the program and I was doing this event with Rebuild called “Black Divinity Meditation Day” and they were both supposed to happen on the weekend when the world shut down...I taught Black Divinity Meditation Day the year prior, to the tune of 125 meditators that came to the Arts Bank on a Saturday morning and meditated with me for an hour straight. Some of them had never meditated before and some had been with me in the Soul Healing Yoga program.”

When the pandemic began, she was asked to carry the yoga practice online:

“I said “No. That’s not what people need in a pandemic where they are going to be challenged mentally, spiritually, and emotionally. This is not a time to invite new people into the practice and start all over again, right now people need to know what to do with their mind. They need to be in mind control over this situation...How do they engage in meditation so that when things get crazy, they don’t go crazy. So, this is where I felt that I really got to stretch out yoga as an on-mat practice and transfer it to yoga as a lifestyle practice... The space was primarily African Americans, but the Satsang brought in all different cultures. That was wonderful because they wanted someone to talk to them about their life, they wanted someone to help them every week with what they were dealing with.”

In addition to health and wellness programs, Rebuild has encouraged programs that inspire community and social cohesion. My interviews as well as evidence from social media accounts show that such programs have some success. I spoke with Duane Powell, DJ and Music Historian. Powell DJs a program called “Sunday Service”. He is the current restorer of the Frankie Knuckles Collection and on the board of the Frankie Knuckles Foundation. He has been a program partner with Rebuild for six years, the second longest program partner with Rebuild. Lastly, he is the former manager of the Doctor Wax Record Store.

Sunday Service has been operating for three years (started around 2019) and takes place every first and third Sunday from 4-7pm. Powell says it’s referred to as Sunday Service because:

“People leave here feeling like the things they go to their place of worship for they also come here to get. It is intergenerational, I love the fact that I have young and old. Last week, we had a group of little children on the dance floor. And it’s just a very loving community exchange in that manner. I didn’t want it to feel like you were coming to a party. I didn’t want it to feel like “nightlife”. That’s not what I wanted to convey. I am conveying how the music really uplifts you, and how the music and being in the space and congregating with that fellowship, it will fill you up like a church would and you can walk in the week with this energy. That’s pretty much the basis of it.”

People jokingly started calling Duane Powell “Pastor” because he cultivated a significant following because of his DJ sets, referring to his fans as “parishioners” or “his congregation.” Powell: “I remember certain Sundays where the music has had people catch the holy ghost. I

remember vividly on separate occasions where people had to be taken off the floor and fanned and given water because they lost themselves in the music.“

There have been comments that Duane Powell’s music sets have brought the “House” (music) community with the art world, and how the house community engages with the Stony Island Arts Bank.

“They come and feel like this space is one of their homes. A lot of times a lot of us don’t realize that we don’t really engage in art galleries because the art galleries are not in our neighborhoods here in Chicago. But once you are here you experience the music, you experience the art, and you’re engaging in an inter-generational environment, I have had people in the audience as old as 75-80 years old in the same room as someone as young as five... In addition to Sunday Service, I do a lecture series, with Youth Chicago’s Arts and Public Life program. Around certain artists’ birthdays I would do tribute sets and tie it in with Sunday Service like Stevie Wonder. The first year I did that one it actually fell on Mother’s Day, and a lot of people came and brought their mothers, including Robert Lewis Clarke, he is a visual artist. His mom is a Chicago Stepping Champion²⁰¹. Her and her partner took to the floor (Powell then gave a joyful chuckle) and everyone went crazy. That day was seriously like, it was like, a big family something (sic). It was just beautiful.”

Powell recalls another memory when a homeless woman from the neighborhood wandered into the building. She was naturally tentative in her approach, but the community welcomed her and made her feel safe. Once she felt safe, he saw her “loosen up” and commune with the other participants. He stated that was the general feeling of community and openness during the Sunday Service programs at the Arts Bank.

Val Free has similar thoughts about the significance of events by Rebuild :

“Oh yeah, just their overall vibe. Let’s talk about it. It’s Black. It’s upbeat. It’s the thing people need to see that they haven’t seen. They have a whole vibe over there, like it’s real cool. It’s not Jazz but it’s that feeling, kind like you’re in the “in-crowd” kinda thing. You come in feeling one way you come out feeling another. Like it does that to you...like it’s the place to be. I love when they have events like that. You do get to see

²⁰¹ Stepping is a mode a dance that is popular in Chicago, where two partners, usually a man and a woman, dance and swing in unison. Many times, the couple will wear matching outfits. It is quite prestigious to be a known Chicago Stepping Champion.

our history and no other venue in Chicago displays it like that. They do it the best. You can say the DuSable Museum, yes, the DuSable Museum, but this piece here it brings in people from all around the world, different demographics, the Black folk, from everywhere. They're not just the older people who still looking to be validated for what we did when we were doing the Civil Rights movement. This is about who we are, where we've been, and where we're going. All of that in one place. That's why we are claiming it over here in the South Shore (chuckles)... my thing is if we keep getting more people like Theaster who are setting the stage that this is a Black neighborhood, here you are going to engage in Black culture. We haven't said it in a while but we used to call South Shore the cultural soul coast of Chicago, We were trying to make sure you knew who lives here. So Theaster's project, the things that Theaster is doing is making that real [sic] loud and proud."

During one of my visits to Chicago I spoke with a Chef Resident at Retreat at Currency Exchange Café, which is part of the Arts Incubator as part of the University of Chicago. They worked with the team at Rebuild to develop menus, learn hospitality business fundamentals and support their growth as an artist and creative entrepreneur."²⁰³

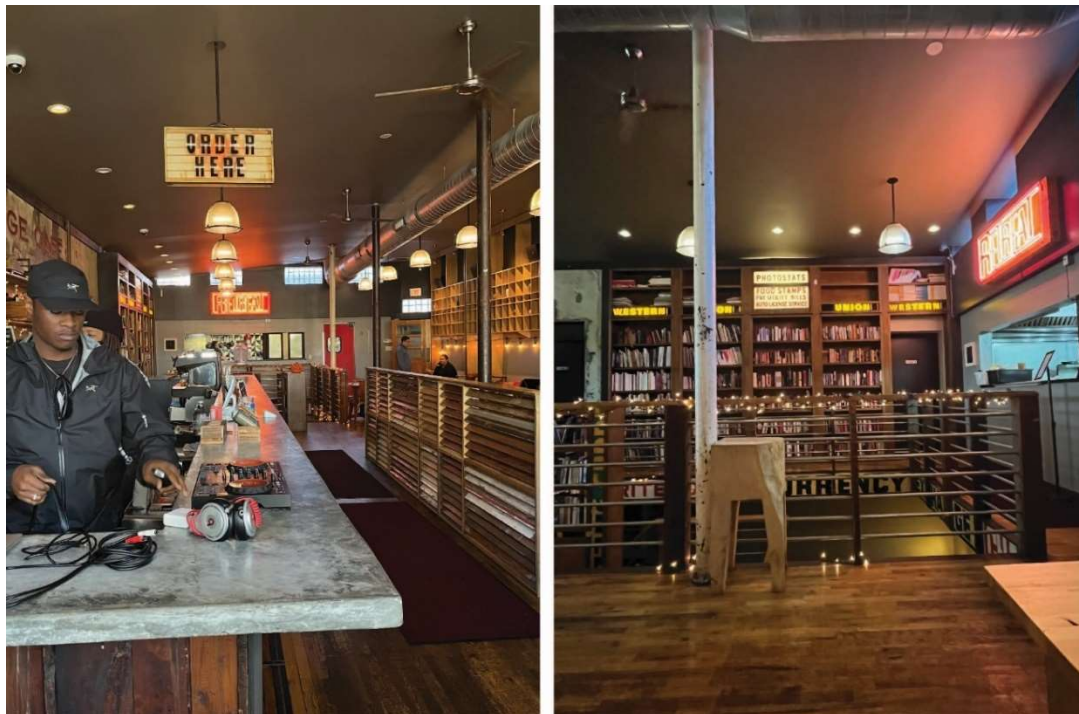


Figure 54 The Retreat at Currency Exchange Café. Photos by the author.

²⁰³ From Retreat Currency Exchange Instagram (@retreatcurrencyexchange) , October 4, 2022. <https://www.instagram.com/p/CjS8MgeLpM5/>

They shared with me their passion for creating innovative yet comforting dishes. They explained how they enjoyed pushing the boundaries of traditional cuisine and offering unique options that are not typically found in the area and explained her commitment to providing people who come to The Retreat with an exceptional dining experience. "I believe we deserve that. We deserve more as a community, as Black people, as a Black neighborhood, just like these White neighborhoods. Let's introduce things on the menu that we go all over the city for, but instead let's have it right here."²⁰⁴

The following is a long quote from the Chef Resident regarding the communal engagement at the Retreat, but I believe the full quote needs to be respected.

"What I've witnessed is the community is very tight knit. Like everyone knows someone from either Rebuild or... You have a lot of locals come here. This place reminds me of like a "Cheers" (a reference to the popular 1980's television show.) People are friends here. If you walk through the door nine times outta ten, someone in here knows you or is getting to know you, then you become a regular. This place is also kind of like a safe haven, like I have seen people work on their laptops here, bring a whole easel and canvas and paint in the front, which I think is really cool. I haven't seen that in public before, but here you can be you and work on you in a public area with no judgement. That's what I really like about this place. You have the freedom to create whatever you need to create from eight to five [pm]. This is not a regular coffee shop, this is a work space. This is an artists space, this is space for artistic people to come and be themselves, be around others and be intellectual. You're not going to find this except on 55th and Garfield. Plus, they just accept you here. Like I'm pretty weird. The fact that they can accept my weirdness and I can accept theirs. They practice acceptance here. I think that plays a really big part. A lot of people that have low self-esteem, don't think highly of themselves, you can come here and they will big you up²⁰⁵ Even if you want to come and sit in the corner by yourself, they will let you do that. Sometimes you just need a space that will let you be you, without you feeling like you are by yourself."

When asked about Theaster Gates contribution, especially with the Stony Island Arts bank, and has it had an impact on the neighborhood, the Chicago planning official said:

²⁰⁴ Interview dated October 7, 2022.

²⁰⁵ "Big you up" is a term which means support and build you up.

“I definitely think it has. I mean that whole area really didn’t have much going on until he was like “I live over here, oh that house across the street [speaking about purchasing the Listening House]...”... If you look at photos of what Stony Island, this was where the 1893 Worlds Columbian Exposition was, it was in Jackson Park, so you had hotels and towers and very large scale regal spaces and that building (Stony Island Arts Bank) is the last thing left from that era when Stony Island was the place to be so to be able to take that make something happen with it has made a big difference on the street and made the idea of a cultural corridor make sense. If you would only have the Museum of Science and Industry and the Presidential Library to the north and then the Regal Theater in the south, you don’t have another thing to bridge it and create some ripples in between.”

Finally, I inquired how does Rebuild see themselves in terms of their impact on Chicago, their urban planning efforts, and arts-based development. An employee of Rebuild explained how Gates arts practice comes first echoing the situation in Project Row Houses:

“What is important to convey because this is often misinterpreted or miscommunicated is that Rebuild’s work really started with an artistic intervention with Theaster’s own practice. It wasn’t born out of activism per se, it wasn’t born out of this eye for development even though Theaster built in all these different expertise, it really is the arm through which he practices, the vessel through which he shares his social practice... folks often assume that all of the work that we is to directly address some of the more practical and civic problems that our community faces. What’s important is what Theaster has quite often communicated. Rebuild demonstrates what’s possible and that it is possible to solve complex civic problems using arts and culture, but I think a lot of folks have turned to him after this has happened and asked him to solve other very political problems and he’s like “I’m an artist. I can think creatively outside of the box about how to solve problems, but I do that through arts and culture because that’s what I know.” He often works across the board and is really innovative in his approach, but I think to frame the organization as an extension of Theaster’s artistic practice is a new lens which a lot of people haven’t considered...Theaster has often said that the Arts Bank is his largest art project or artwork to date and I think that’s a really helpful way in terms of our staff too, to understand and framing his ambitions for the organization.”

CONCLUSION

According to my interviews the Rebuild Foundation has made a significant impact on the South Side and the city of Chicago by contributing to the dialogue about the richness of Chicago architecture, arts, and culture. They cultivate partnerships with individual creatives and small arts and community organizations, as well as large foundations like MacArthur or Kresge. Rebuild's approach to urban planning and neighborhood connectivity is an extension of their artistic practice. Though they may not have as many neighborhood health partnerships as PRH, their collaborations have positively impacted the mental health and basic needs of those in Grand Crossing. The organization operates on two tracks: their service to the residents and artists of Grand Crossing and Chicago, and their global reach to Black artists. While most of the attention to Chicago artists is through their Art + Public Life program with the University of Chicago, Rebuild itself is moving towards a national and international focus. They have provided housing, but their focus remains on preserving Black culture and arts. This approach has prevented displacement of culture, if not necessarily of people, and is the cornerstone of their efforts to preserve and protect Black culture and heritage.



Figure 55 Mark Bradford. Photograph by Stefan Ruiz

Case study c: Mark Bradford + Art+Practice Los Angeles, CA

“Giving people access to contemporary art is one thing, but meeting people at their need, their personal, kind of emotional, private need that has to do with something more urgent is kind of where Art + Practice sits, at the crossroads of access and need. “- Marc Bradford²⁰⁷



Figure 56 The Art + Practice exhibition space in Leimert Park, Los Angeles. 14 September 2017. Photo: Josiah Green.

GENERAL INTRODUCTION

In 2013, Artist Mark Bradford, social activist Allan DiCastro, and philanthropist and art collector Eileen Harris Norton, opened Art + Practice in Bradford’s childhood neighborhood of Leimert Park in Los Angeles. Art + Practice is a non-profit organization that supports local

²⁰⁷ [www.youtube.com](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=I5mhdCvhDtQ). “Mark Bradford’s Layered Urban Art | Brilliant Ideas Ep. 76.” Bloomberg Television, April 3, 2018. <https://youtu.be/I5mhdCvhDtQ>.

youth transitioning out of the foster care system and provides the community with free access to museum-curated contemporary art (Bradley, 2019).

Bradford won the MacArthur Fellowship in 2009²⁰⁸, induction to the American Academy of Arts and Sciences²⁰⁹ and received the US Department of State's Medal of Arts. Art + Practice, the most recent establishment of the projects in this dissertation, has been recognized by the Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden.

LOS ANGELES

In 2013, Los Angeles County (based on Market Exchange Rates) was ranked 21st largest economy in the world surpassing countries like Norway, Iran, Sweden, Belgium and Poland.²¹⁰ Residential and commercial real estate was still recovering from the 2007-2009 recession but showed signs of improvement because of low mortgage rates.²¹¹ Leimert Park Village, Leimert Park's commercial business district, was still suffering from many empty storefronts, and the city had just approved a Leimert Park stop on the Metro K-line that would go to LAX airport.²¹²

As of mid-year 2023, the Los Angeles construction industry has been strong, especially with multifamily and affordable housing and manufacturing despite a slowdown in commercial construction.²¹³ In Los Angeles, with significant projects in the works being the LA River Path Project, which is a bike and pedestrian pathway that travels along the LA river from Elysian

²⁰⁸ [www.macfound.org](https://www.macfound.org/fellows/class-of-2009/mark-bradford). "Mark Bradford." MacArthur Foundation, 2009. <https://www.macfound.org/fellows/class-of-2009/mark-bradford>.

²⁰⁹ American Academy of Arts & Sciences. "Mark Bradford," July 27, 2023. <https://www.amacad.org/person/mark-bradford>.

²¹⁰ Kleinhenz, Robert A. et. al, Los Angeles County Economic Development Corporation 2013-2014 Economic Forecast and Industry Outlook. 2013 - <https://laedc.org/reports/2013-14EconomicForecastandIndustryOutlook.pdf>.

²¹¹ *ibid*

²¹² Jennings, Angel. "A turning point for Leimert Park Village" Los Angeles Times, Feb. 9, 2014, <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-leimert-park-village-20140210-story.html>

²¹³ Shetty, Anush. "Los Angeles, California Construction Market Analysis." Cumming Insights, n.d. <https://insights.cumming-group.com/regional/los-angeles/>.

Heights (about 3.5 miles from and through downtown LA) to the Maywood section of LA County, eight miles to the southeast.²¹⁴

LEIMERT PARK

Leimert Park was established in 1927 and is one of Los Angeles' first planned communities.²¹⁵ Located in southern central Los Angeles, at the time it stood on the edge of the city and was one of many new development communities by its founder Walter Leimert.²¹⁶ Leimert Park had restrictive covenants (or as it was referred to “beneficial restrictions”) that ensured that new residents would be kept in a racially and ethnically homogeneous community.²¹⁷

After the ruling that which made restrictive covenants illegal, African Americans started to move into the area in the 1940s and 1950s.²¹⁸ Covering a small area consisting of over just under 1.2 square miles, Leimert Park is one of the most revered areas in Los Angeles for African Americans, considered an epicenter of Black art and culture on the West Coast. Musical legends Ray Charles and Ella Fitzgerald were residents of Leimert Park.²¹⁹ Despite all the notoriety, cachet, and cultural contributions Leimert Park has not been designated a California Cultural District by the California Arts Council. There are two Cultural Districts

²¹⁴ LA Metro. “LA River Path Project,” n.d. <https://www.metro.net/projects/lariverpath/>.

²¹⁵ Sides, Josh. “The Center Can Hold: Leimert Park and Black Los Angeles.” KCET, November 12, 2013. <https://www.kcet.org/shows/departures/the-center-can-hold-leimert-park-and-Black-los-angeles>.

²¹⁶ Kitazawa, Yosuke. “Walter H. Leimert and the Selling of a Perfect Planned Community.” KCET, September 19, 2013. <https://www.kcet.org/shows/departures/walter-h-leimert-and-the-selling-of-a-perfect-planned-community>.

²¹⁷ Sides 2013.

²¹⁸ *ibid*

²¹⁹ www.discoverlosangeles.com. “Discover Leimert Park in Los Angeles | Discover Los Angeles,” n.d. <https://www.discoverlosangeles.com/things-to-do/discover-leimert-park-in-los-angeles>.

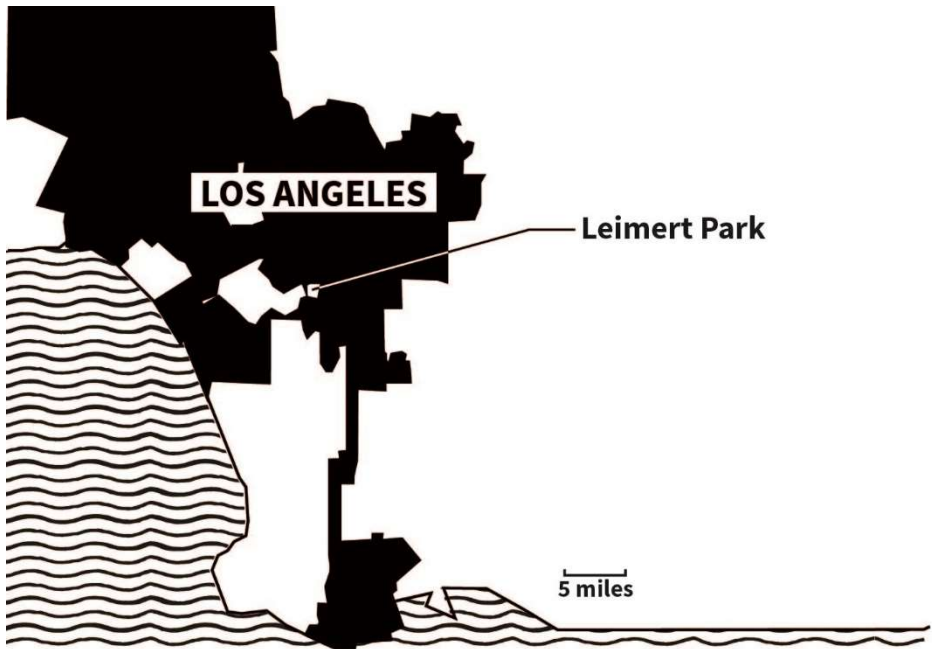


Figure 57 Diagram of Los Angeles County with location of Leimert Park

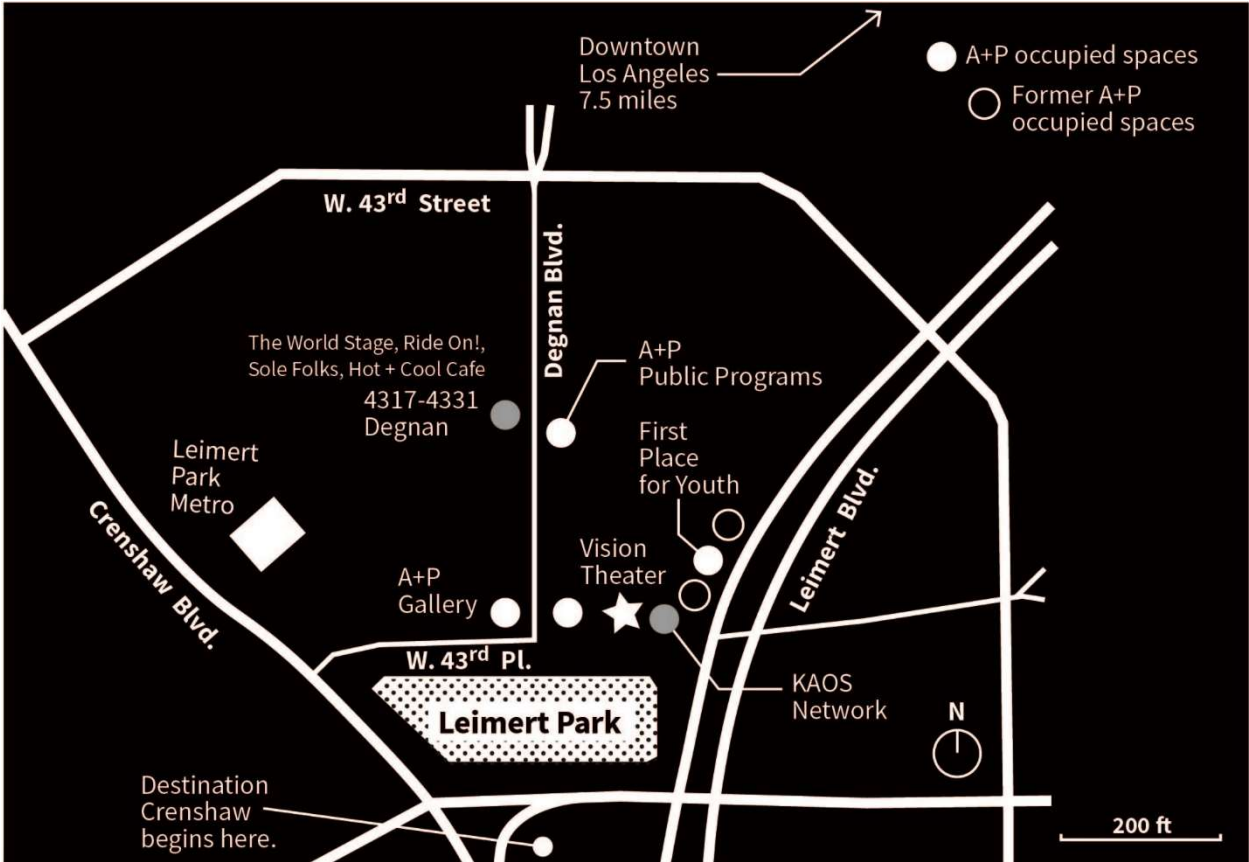


Figure 58 Leimert Park Village and the Art + Practice Campus

located in Los Angeles: Little Tokyo, and San Pedro Waterfront Arts, Cultural, and Entertainment District.²²⁰

The Los Angeles Department of City Planning *West Adams-Baldwin Hills-Leimert Community 2016* describes Leimert Park Village (the specific area that Art + Practice occupies) as follows:

“The neighborhood’s commercial district, known as Leimert Park Village, which radiates north from a small formal plaza (designed by the sons of Frederick Law Olmstead) and located at the intersection of Degnan, Leimert and Crenshaw Boulevards, is anchored by the signature Spanish Baroque and Beaux-Arts inspired Leimert Theatre (now known as the Vision Theatre). The theatre remains a focal cultural venue which continues to incubate Leimert Park’s emergence as a regional destination, especially for African American arts, culture and entertainment” (Los Angeles Department of City Planning 2016. 2-3).

The Vision Theater (originally called the Leimert Theater) was built by eccentric billionaire Howard Hughes in 1931.²²¹ In the 1960s, after evolving into an African American district, Leimert Park village was a hotbed of arts, creativity, and economic empowerment and the Vision Theater served as a focal point as a movie theater. Mark Ridley Thomas, Councilmen of the 10th District at the time, persuaded the city of Los Angeles to purchase the Vision Theater in 1997 through a cultural affairs program.²²²

Other arts landmarks of Leimert Park remain and have been repurposed. Ms. Jackie Ryan, known as the Godmother of Leimert Park, started the Zambezi Bazaar along with her siblings selling cultural merchandise and art in the 1990s and was past president of the Leimert Park Merchants Association. She has been a resident of the area for over 60 years. In our interview she discussed the presence and membership of many in the community of the Black Arts Council in the 1960s founded by Cecil Ferguson and Claude Booker. One of the most

²²⁰ California Cultural Districts. “Districts,” n.d. <https://www.caculturaldistricts.org/about-the-districts>.

²²¹ LA Conservancy. “Vision/Leimert Theatre,” n.d. <https://www.laconservancy.org/locations/visionleimert-theatre>.

²²²From Stacy Lewis interview, September 3, 2022. He used to work with Ridley Thomas.

important galleries for burgeoning African American artists was the Brockman Gallery (Figure 59).²²³ Established by Alonzo and Dale Davis in the late 1967, the gallery was a lightning rod, exhibiting the early works of artists such as Romare Bearden, Elizabeth Catlett, Charles White, David Hammons, and Dr. John Biggers (the major influence for Project Row Houses).²²⁴ Art + Practice now occupies the former space of the Brockman Gallery and uses it for public programming.

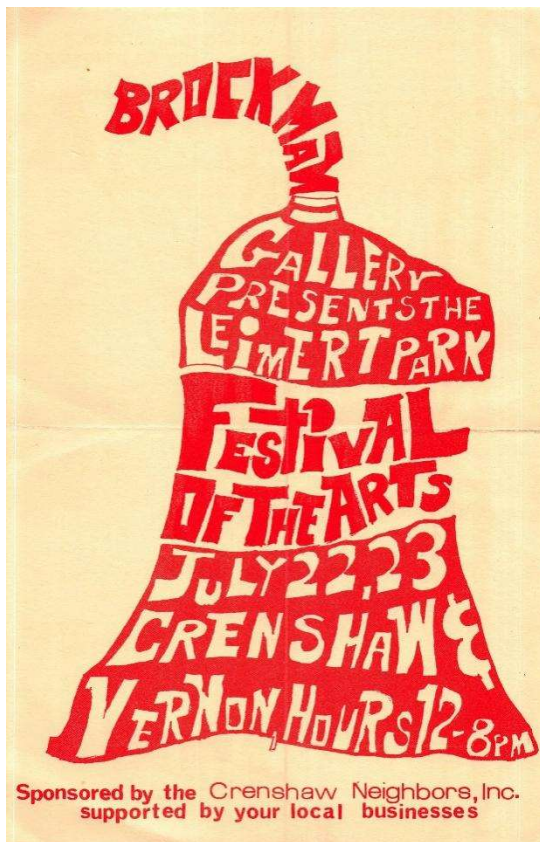


Figure 59 Poster Leimert Park Festival of the Arts by the Brockman Gallery, c.1969
Courtesy of Los Angeles Archivist Collective.

²²³ From Jackie Ryan Interview, September 22, 2022

²²⁴ Knopka, Rosemarie. "Outsiders Welcome: Brockman Gallery & the Art of Inclusion." Los Angeles Archivists Collective, June 11, 2019. <https://www.laacollective.org/work/outsiders-welcome-brockman-gallery>.

In 2022, Leimert Park Village was continuing its revitalization. When I toured the area, most of the storefronts had been filled and there was a lively presence of street vendors. The new (and controversial) Leimert Park stop on the Metro Light Rail was in late phase construction. Despite all that is going on in the area, Leimert Park is not designated an opportunity zone by the City of Los Angeles.²²⁵ Another project in development that is using art to reflect community and identity is Destination Crenshaw, a 1.3-mile free open-air museum that stretches from Leimert Park to below West Slauson Avenue.

“Destination Crenshaw is Black LA’s creative, collaborative, community-led response to an injustice. When it was decided, against the community’s will, that the planned Crenshaw/LAX train would slice through the heart of Black LA’s main thoroughfare, traveling at street level instead of underground, long-time residents and business owners were incredulous. Incredulous and aware of the very real potential for the neighborhood’s vibrant Black culture to be uprooted in the train’s wake – along with 300 business parking spaces and 400 trees that had been removed to make way for the Crenshaw/LAX line. If something were not done, the train that would bring tourists from LAX into the City, might also trigger the cultural erasure of Los Angeles’ Black community.”²²⁶

By the time the project is complete, Destination Crenshaw will be the largest Black led project in the U.S. and will have commissioned works of art from 100 young, emerging, mid-career and established artists²²⁷.

A high-ranking planning official for the City of Los Angeles discussed the project:

“Destination Crenshaw, which is this very intentional idea of taking something that was really about the function of the city, and how you get from one place to the other like with the K-Line [part of the Los Angeles Metro Light Rail] and how it disrupted this community, it disrupted the street, it disrupted how people interacted with the street, it was a good idea of making it easier for people all over L.A., especially around the community of Leimert Park, to be able to move around the city better through Metrorail, but it did have some other consequences, and I look at Destination Crenshaw as a way to use art to heal that. Art has a way to uplift the soul, art has a way

²²⁵ Arcgis.com. “Opportunity Zones - City of Los Angeles,” 2023.

<https://ladcp.maps.arcgis.com/apps/View/index.html?appid=bb6f541748dc40faabf67ee275fe1805>

²²⁶ Destination Crenshaw. “Vision – Destination Crenshaw,” n.d. <https://destinationcrenshaw.la/vision/>.

²²⁷ Ibid.

to create joy, art has a way to heal and I see Destination Crenshaw as a way for art to heal on multiple levels.

Destination Crenshaw is not just about healing a place physically, but it was also about this perception that you bring this transportation here and that creates displacement. So, we potentially create it through all these different avenues. That is the greatest challenge, how do you add without subtracting. I think that is our greatest challenge.”²²⁸

During our discussion they also stressed the importance of bringing landmark art spaces to a community that may not always have easy access to it (though as discussed earlier in this chapter the community has a deep connection to Black art and creativity). “What future artists are going to get inspired by that [Destination Crenshaw]? And that’s important because we are not planting the seeds enough for future artists in our communities.” I would posit that there are plenty of future and existing artists in African American underserved communities, but they may not have the resources (finances, studio spaces to work) to fully create and show their work. Or they must be inventive with the materials and spaces they do have access to (a further discussion later in this chapter).

“We have this opportunity when we look at public spaces that there is more to the city than public space, what happens in the private spaces, and I am very inspired by Theaster Gates and the South Side of Chicago and what he has done, in a very intentional way, and not necessarily on the streets and the sidewalks, but within private buildings and bringing people in. As we create these very public spaces for art, we have the opportunity to create them in the private spaces as well and make a more cohesive community...[What I see for us]in city planning is to allow for the Theaster Gates and people like him to be flourish and be creative and come up with things we would never think of.”²²⁹

Enter Mark Bradford.

²²⁸ Interview-November 16, 2022

²²⁹ Continuation of Interview-November 16, 2022.

MARK BRADFORD - THE ARTIST, AND THE INCEPTION OF ART + PRACTICE

Like the preceding cases, Mark Bradford is a trained visual artist mentored by the artist Charles Gaines while he studied at California Institute of the Arts. Bradford began his art journey close to age 30 while working as a hairdresser in his mother's salon called Foxye Hair; when he sold his first painting in 2001 for \$5,000 (coincidentally to Eileen Harris Norton), he told his mother "Girl, I think I found a way out of the beauty shop."²³⁰ Working in collages, Bradford's early work prioritized the use of endpapers, small, fine, translucent sheets of paper used for permed and curled hair, boxes usually run about \$5, for budgetary reasons and as a nod to his roots in the salon (Strawberry²³¹, Figure 61, is one of those end paper collages). In his work, he would and still uses signage from under resourced neighborhoods that advertise "We buy houses" or "Payday loans." These items, inextricably if not painfully tied to Black urban culture, were vital in the origins of his practice and deeply connected to his philosophic voice as an artist. Much of Bradford's work deals with historical street maps and grids, with paper layered on canvas, with subject matters such as the Watts Rebellion of 1965²³² and other topics dealing with unrest, over policing, and history.

Bradford received a major break when "Bradford was invited by Thelma Golden, then the assistant director and head curator of the Studio Museum, to contribute work to her 2001 "Freestyle" show, where he exhibited with future art luminaries like Julie Mehretu and Sanford Biggers."²³³

²³⁰ Youtube.com. "Art on 60 Minutes: Mark Bradford", Interview with Anderson Cooper. 2022.

<https://youtu.be/jp9ck6lOkY0>

²³¹ "Strawberry" is a term for a crack-addicted woman who supports herself through prostitution.

²³² The Watts Rebellion (or often referred to as the Watts Riots) in the summer of 1965 is one of the most famous uprisings in American History. It began with the traffic stop of a Black citizen by a White officer. In the Watts section of South-Central Los Angeles, community frustration over police brutality, high unemployment, segregation, and racial violence led to five explosive days of disorder and chaos. In the end over 30 people died, thousands were arrested, and millions of dollars in property damage. https://crdl.usg.edu/events/watts_riots/

²³³ Muhammad, Ismail. "The Artist Mark Bradford Is Finally Ready to Go There", New York Times, April 19, 2023, <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/04/19/magazine/mark-bradford-art.html>. Sanford Biggers is cousin to Dr. John Biggers, the mentor to Rick Lowe and the Magnificent Seven.

In 2015, Bradford received his first solo museum exhibition in Los Angeles, ‘Scorched Earth’ (Figure 62) at the Hammer Museum²³⁴. This most likely set the stage for the Hammer Museum’s partnership with Art+Practice that came later. Bradford also helped design the logo for the Los Angeles Institute of Contemporary Art in 2016²³⁵. Bradford is considered one of the most respected contemporary artists in the world²³⁶ and his work has sold at auction for \$12 Million Dollars.²³⁷



Figure 60 Mark Bradford in his studio. Photo: Agata Gravante.

²³⁴ Hauser & Wirth. “Mark Bradford,” n.d. <https://www.hauserwirth.com/artists/2838-mark-bradford/>

²³⁵Institute of Contemporary Art, Los Angeles. “Ica La Collaborates with Artist Mark Bradford on New Visual Identity,” October 2016. <https://www.theicala.org/en/press-releases/6-ica-la-collaborates-with-artist-mark-bradford-on-new-visual-identity>.

²³⁶“Hill, Anita. The 100 Most Influential People of 2021: Mark Bradford” Time Magazine. September 15, 2021. <https://time.com/collection/100-most-influential-people-2021/6095929/mark-bradford/>

²³⁷ Kinsella, Eileen. Eli Broad’s Museum Is the Buyer of the Record-Setting \$12 Million Mark Bradford Painting, artnet news. March 16, 2018. <https://news.artnet.com/market/broad-museum-mark-bradford-painting-1246217>



Figure 61 Mark Bradford, *Strawberry*, 2002. Courtesy of Mark Bradford Studio and Hauser & Wirth.

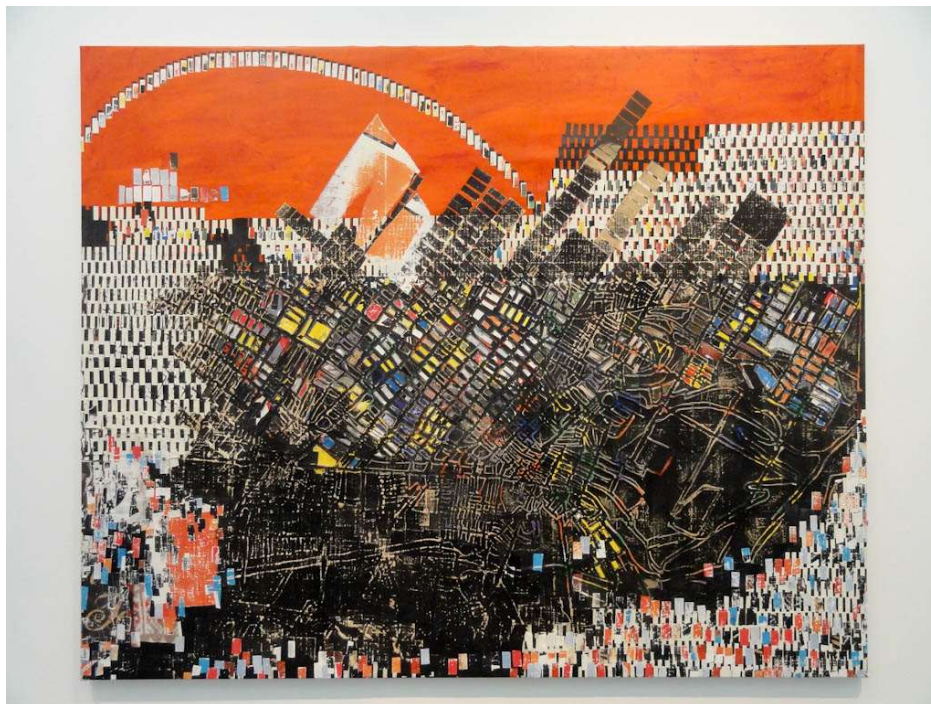


Figure 62 Mark Bradford, *Scorched Earth*, 2006. Courtesy of Mark Bradford Studio and Hauser & Wirth

WHY WAS THIS AREA SELECTED FOR THE INTERVENTION?

In addition to being Bradford's childhood neighborhood, the history of Leimert Park made it an ideal location for a world-class arts institution centering on Black art. The World Stage, a famous 30-year jazz institution started by jazz drummer Billy Higgins and community activist and poet Kamau Daáoud, is a foundational institution of Leimert Park Village and is on Degnan Boulevard, a few buildings away from Art + Practice. Ben Caldwell operates the KAOS network, a theater/music/art space that is popular in the neighborhood. The site of the Art+Practice Gallery used to be a beauty supply store that Bradford would visit during the days at his mother's salon.

The collaboration between Bradford, DiCastro, and Harris Norton seemed to be best placed in familiar territory. Art+Practice was established to be an art and social service organization. "Their vision and values were brought here to Leimert Park, in part because of Mark's history here, but also because as Mark was working in this neighborhood, he found that there was a lot of young people wandering around the streets at odd hours of the day." Art +Practice Director Sophia Belsheim in an interview about Art + Practice for LA Art for PBS.²³⁸ In Allan DiCastro's portion of the interview he remarked "He [Bradford] would go and talk to somebody and ask "Why are you just hanging out?" and he was pretty sure they were homeless. So then he said "There seems to be a foster care problem" and we looked into it and said "Okay, well that's what we should do because it's a very big problem in South L.A."²³⁹

Mark Bradford discussed Art+Practice in 2014²⁴⁰ when the organization was still in its infancy:

"Art + Practice has to do with the public sector, the traditional sector. I like that. I like traditional Black neighborhoods. But I want to insert something that is a little bit more layered. Leimert Park has a very long history of arts, but it's very Afrocentric, very Muslim, very formed. There can be that mainstream, but there can be a liberal fringe

²³⁸ Facebook.com/pbs. "LAaRT | Art + Practice | Season 2018 | Episode 19 | PBS." www.pbs.org, 2018.

<https://www.pbs.org/video/art-practice-5ww4nv/>

²³⁹ *ibid.*

²⁴⁰ in conversation in his studio, with artists A.L. Steiner and Wu Tsang, and Connie Butler and Jamillah James facilitated by the Hammer Museum.

too in the same area. We can coexist. It will coexist in Leimert Park. So, I thought that I would like to have a conversation with the community about contemporary ideas and social services and social justice. Because I think that the art world sometimes is a little too insulated, and I think also that social services are a little too insulated. So, I have an independent program in which I work with foster youth; we have an exhibition program, which shows contemporary art, and we have a public program, in which we actually talk about social justice and contemporary ideas. So, it's four, five buildings in Leimert Park. I don't think there is anything transgressive about the model. Give us a couple of years to see how it plays out, how we impact the community, and how the community impacts us. It's going to take some years to find out" (Butler 2015. 178).

Art + Practice Organizational Timeline

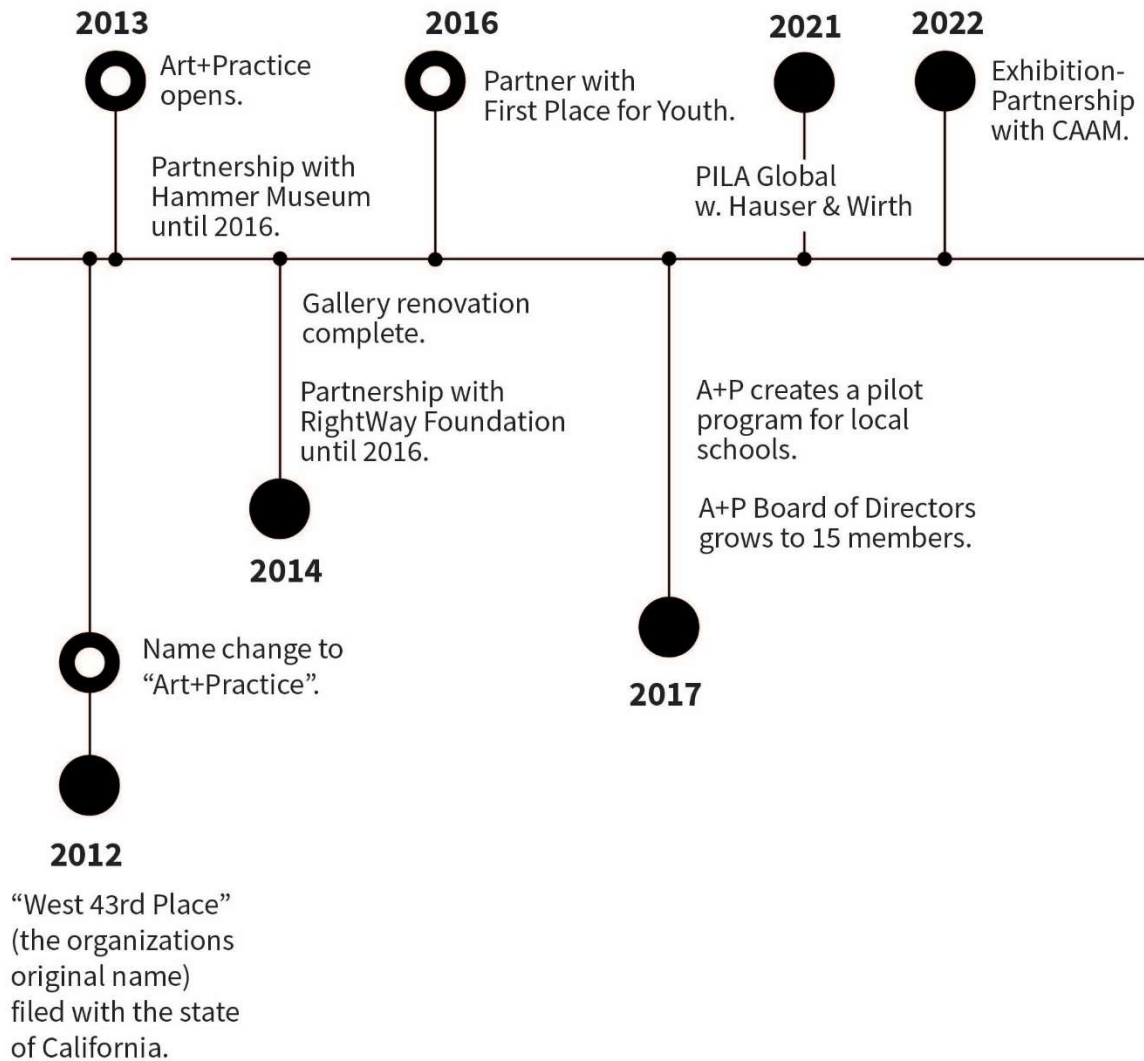


Figure 63 Art + Practice Organizational Timeline

ORIGINS, ESTABLISHMENT AND EARLY SUPPORTERS

“West 43rd Place” began as a Non-Profit Public Benefit Corporation in October 2012. The name was changed to “Art + Practice” in December 2012.²⁴¹ The mission was to offer a space bringing museum-quality contemporary art to Leimert Park. Bradford felt strongly that people from the neighborhood shouldn’t have to travel to see world class art by prominent artists of color. "I feel like artists are outsiders for one reason or another, and in many ways foster youth—through no volition of their own—are outsiders. So, I thought, well, [from] one outsider group to another, maybe we can create a platform, and maybe we can create a conversation," - A+P co-creator Mark Bradford.²⁴² They partnered first with the RightWay Foundation²⁴³ and later First Place for Youth. The mission of First Place for Youth is to help foster youth build the skills to transition out of the system and into self-sufficiency and responsible adulthood. Ninety-one percent of the youth they work with are Black, Indigenous, or identifies as a person of color. Eighty-eight percent of youth attain housing once they have completed the program.²⁴⁴ Southern California Regional Executive Director for First Place for Youth, Hellen Hong:

“When we met Mark, and Allan, and their team, we kind of fell in love with each other. One is they really loved our program, the focus, and the rigor of the focus on education and employment. Ultimately, we all want the same thing which is economic self-sufficiency for our foster youth and they understood that housing was a key element to achieve that.”²⁴⁵

The buildings that house Art+Practice and First Place for Youth are owned by Mark Bradford and his partner, Allan DiCastro. The current 6,000 sf exhibition space was completed in 2016 by Lydia Vilppu, Architect. Early exhibit supporters of Art + Practice include the Hammer

²⁴¹ Art + Practice Articles of Incorporation from the California Secretary of State office.

²⁴² Tse, Carman . “Leimert Park Gets a Rad New Art Space with a Black Panther Exhibit.” LAist, February 26, 2015. <https://laist.com/news/entertainment/hammer-art-practice>.

²⁴³ Another agency that helps foster youth transition into employment and stable housing. <https://www.therightwayfoundation.org/>

²⁴⁴ <https://firstplaceforyouth.org/>

²⁴⁵ interview about Art + Practice for LA Art for PBS, episode aired on November 20, 2017. <https://www.pbs.org/video/art-practice-5ww4nv/>

Museum who offered administrative and logistical assistance via a two-year \$600,000 grant from the James Irvine Foundation.²⁴⁶

CURRENT ORGANIZATIONAL STRUCTURE, PROGRAMMING, INCOME AND OPERATING BUDGET

Art + Practice Organizational Chart

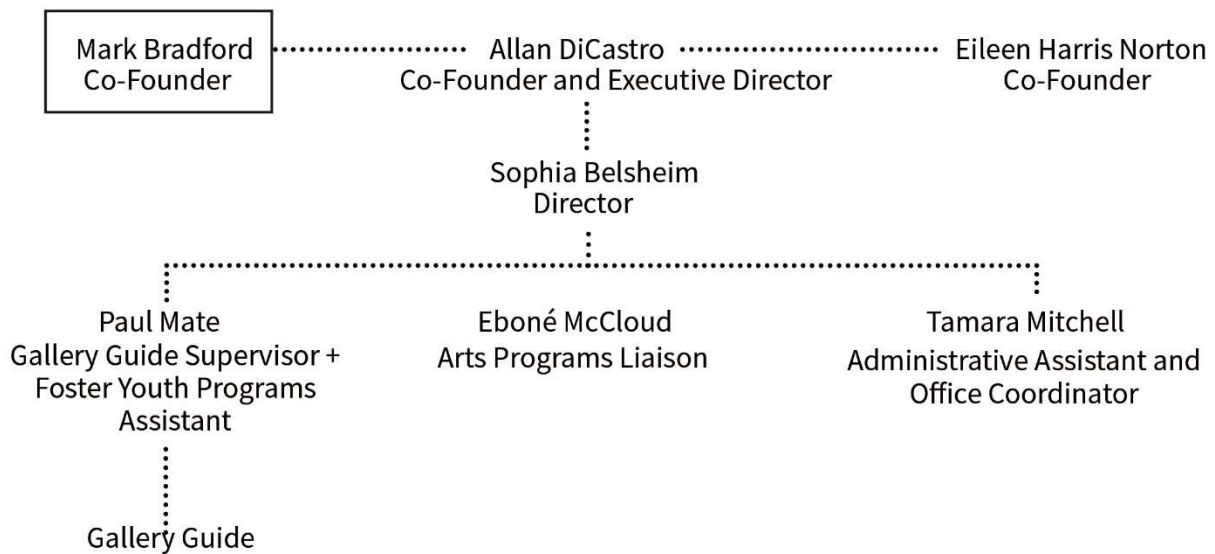


Figure 64 Art+ Practice Organizational Chart

Art + Practice has been in operation since 2013. As of 2023, Art + Practice is a 501 (c)3 non-profit and operates with a small staff (Figure 64), which keeps overhead low, but they enjoy sizeable income, often receiving over three million a year; in one year (2018) Art + Practice’s income was over eleven million dollars.²⁴⁷ Art + Practice’s 2018 990 tax form, Schedule B-Contributors lists Allan DiCastro, Mark’s partner and the then Director and Treasurer, who contributed \$11, 127, 800. As of 2021, DiCastro's role was Chief Financial Officer. Obviously, their revenue exceeds their expenses, and they may be establishing an endowment. A

²⁴⁶ Miranda, Carolina A., “Mark Bradford’s Art + Practice to bring art, social services to Leimert”, The Los Angeles Times., Dec. 16, 2014. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/miranda/la-et-cam-mark-bradford-art-practice-to-bring-art-social-services-to-leimert-20141215-column.html>

²⁴⁷ From ProPublica and Art + Practice IRS Tax 990 Documents (2013-2020) <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/461471404>

random sampling review of 4 years of 990 tax forms-Schedule B, shows much of Art + Practice seems to be funded by the founders,²⁴⁸ occasionally foundations (the Broad Art Foundation and the William Keck Jr Foundation each gave \$10,000 in 2020) but some of their financial contributors are some continuous and one-time individual donors. A sampling of donors is listed in Figure 66.

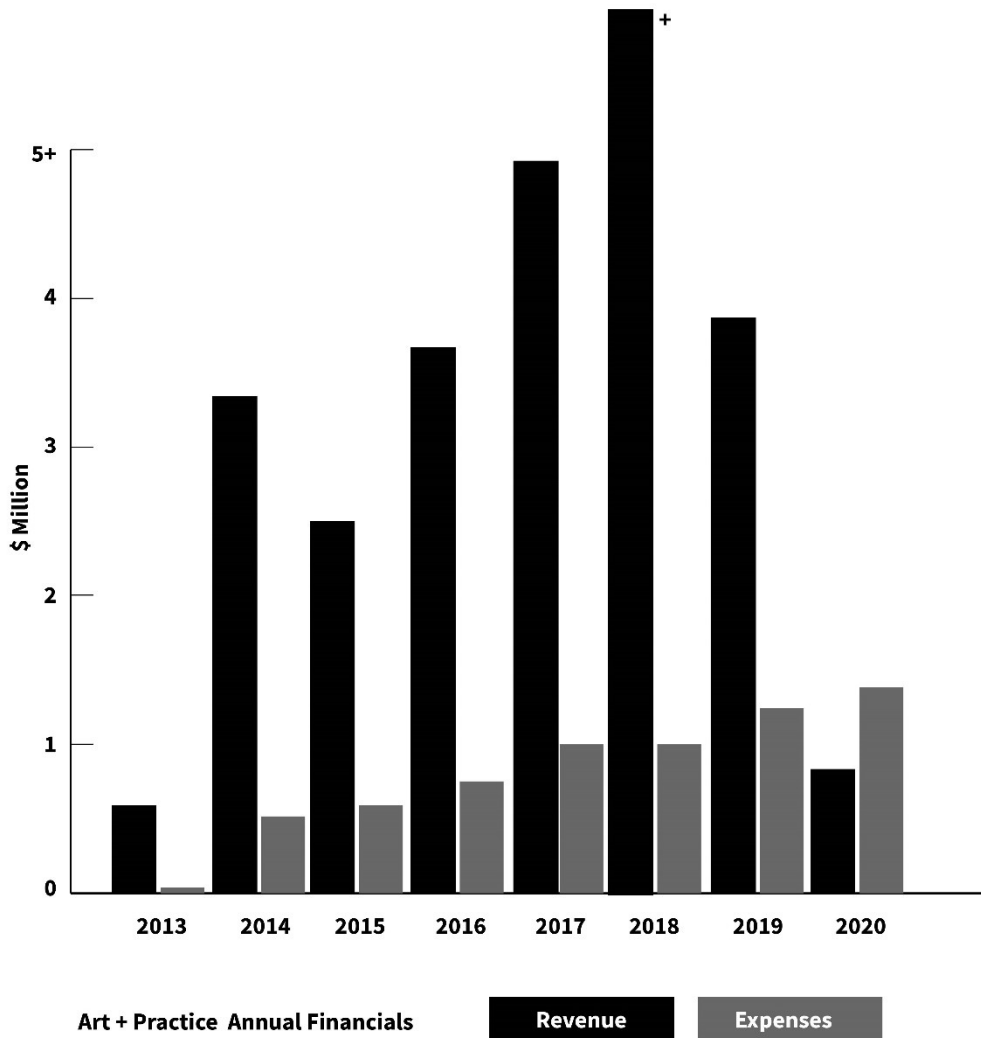


Figure 65 Art+ Practice Annual Financials (2013-2020)

²⁴⁸ In 2021, Eileen Harris Norton donated \$175,000 in 2016, \$50,000 in 2018, and \$150,000 in 2020. Information from tax 990 documents via ProPublica.

| | Revenue | Expenses | Surplus/Loss |
|------|----------------|--------------|----------------|
| 2013 | \$642,793* | \$36,415* | + \$606,378 |
| 2014 | \$3,285,157* | \$475,329* | + \$2,809,828 |
| 2015 | \$2,572,941* | \$634,132* | + \$1,938,809 |
| 2016 | \$3,891,700** | \$765,129** | + \$3,126,571 |
| 2017 | \$4,970,075** | \$904,031** | + \$4,066,044 |
| 2018 | \$11,286,585** | \$961,969** | + \$10,324,616 |
| 2019 | \$3,962,673* | \$1,144,063* | + \$2,818,610 |
| 2020 | \$749,064* | \$1,306,833* | - \$557,769 |

Art + Practice Annual Financials Overview

*derived from Pro Publica

**derived from IRS 990 Tax Forms

Table 7 Art + Practice Annual Revenue and Expenses²⁴⁹

| | Donors |
|-----------------------|--|
| Art + Practice | James Irvine Foundation, Broad Art Foundation, The William Keck Jr Foundation, Eileen Harris Norton Foundation, MafiaPapers, Adam Singer, Allan DiCastro, The Dream Fund, UCLA Donor Advised Fund, Rosemary Kraemer Raitt Foundation, New York Community Trust, Hauser & Wirth, CharityBuzz, and Individual Donors. via ProPublica-Art +Practice Tax documents Forms 990, Schedule B. |

Figure 66 Art + Practice Donors from 2016-2021

²⁴⁹ ProPublica. Art+Practice. <https://projects.propublica.org/nonprofits/organizations/461471404>

The Art + Practice Board of Advisor is composed of notable figures like Dr. Anita Hill, Brandeis Professor of Social Policy, Law, and Women's, Gender and Sexuality Studies.²⁵⁰ Joanne Heyler, President of The Broad Museum, and Sarah Elizabeth Lewis, Associate Professor with the Department of History of Art and Architecture and Department of African and African American Studies at Harvard University. Rick Lowe, of Project Row Houses, is also a board member.²⁵¹

PROGRAMMING, CAMPUS, AND COLLABORATIONS

Art + Practice shares a similar approach to the Rebuild Foundation by offering space through partnerships instead of creating programming on their own. Art + Practice Program Director, Sophia Belsheim, who started in 2014, described the organization as a “conduit” for other organizations to do their best work. At their establishment they had an Artist-in-Residence program, starting with Dale Davis of the Brockman Gallery, Aalia Brown, and Sandy Rodriguez. There is no indication that the Artist-in-Residence program has continued. As of 2023, they had three partnerships, First Place for Youth, with Hauser & Wirth Gallery supporting PILA Global²⁵² and the California African American Museum (CAAM) partnership. The programming for Art + Practice is streamlined and includes an exhibition space where admission is free, and a public program space is free to the public but currently open for scheduled programs only. The properties on the Art + Practice campus are displayed in Figure 58. They have occupied 6 properties over the 10 years in operation. Ms. Belsheim gave an overview of the A + P campus:

4331 Leimert Blvd: The A+P former artists-in-residence program welcomed three artists for a 14-month residency program. The program culminated in an exhibition,

²⁵⁰ Brandeis.edu. “Faculty Guide,” 2023. <http://www.brandeis.edu/facultyguide/>

²⁵¹ Art + Practice. “Staff and Board – Art + Practice.” Accessed August 3, 2023. <https://www.artandpractice.org/about/board-and-staff/>.

²⁵² PILAglobal. “Partners & Funders.” Accessed August 3, 2023. <https://www.pilaglobal.org/partners-and-funders>.



Figure 67 Art+Practice Public Program Space on 4334/32 Degnan Blvd. Photo by author.



Figure 68 Art + Practice Exhibition Space at 3401 W. 43rd Place with art from Thaddeus Mosley (left) and Justen Leroy (right). Photo by author.

curated by Hammer curator Jamillah James. The space was closed due to a dispute with the City of Los Angeles regarding the easement in-front of the property. That dispute is still underway so A+P does not occupy these spaces anymore.

4339 Leimert Blvd: This space was originally Mark's studio but became temporary exhibition space when A+P was in collaboration with the Hammer Museum. They do not currently occupy this space.

4333/37 Leimert Blvd: Originally the location of Mark's mother's hair salon, turned into his artist studio. The space was first occupied by the RightWay Foundation, supporting transition-age foster youth's mental health and job training needs from 2014-2016. In 2016, A+P entered into a collaboration with nonprofit First Place for Youth to provide our local transition-age foster youth with access to housing, education and employment support. That collaboration is still ongoing.

4334/32 Degnan Blvd (Figure 67): Opened in 2015, A+P built out this space to hold artist talks and public programs. The space currently holds CAAM organized public programs.

4346 Degnan Blvd: Former administrative office. Now used for storage.

3401 W. 43rd Place (Figure 68): A+P main exhibition space and admin office, built in 2015. Collaborative exhibitions with the California African American Museum happen in this space.

Partnerships and collaborations are decided by the A+P Board of Directors, Mark Bradford, Allan DiCastro and Eileen Harris Norton. The board of directors included L.A. officials, a Harvard professor, other notable individuals but no Leimert Park community members. Currently A+P has three long-term collaborations with CAAM (a five-year collaboration), First Place for Youth (a five-year collaboration) and PILA global (a two-year collaboration). They find it beneficial to work with organizations over a long period of time to gain familiarity and ensure that the original intention of collaborations are carried out effectively.²⁵³

NEIGHBORHOOD DYNAMICS (2022-2023)

Leimert Park characterizes itself as the nucleus of Black Arts and Culture (capitalizations intentional) in Los Angeles. I observed the atmosphere as engaging and energetic, with some

²⁵³ From Belsheim correspondence, December 12, 2022.

apparent challenges like homelessness, but the area is rich with small businesses. The median household income is \$45,865 and one in five Leimert Park residents have a college degree, which is on par with the rest of Los Angeles.²⁵⁴

Leimert Park has a similar classification to the Rebuild Foundation’s neighborhood (mostly-Black, Low-Income/Susceptible to Displacement),²⁵⁵ though not designated an Opportunity Zone. However, Leimert Park is bordered by the upper class African American Baldwin Hills area classified as “Stable/Advanced Exclusive”.²⁵⁶ In contrast, Leimert Park is defined as middle to upper income African American neighborhood according to the *2016 West Adams – Baldwin Hills - Leimert Community Plan* by the Los Angeles Department of City Planning (1-1). The report also states:

Today, opportunities exist to develop a social and economic climate that can be of significant benefit to the community. Through innovative land use standards and guidelines such as the 2004 Crenshaw Corridor Specific Plan, neighborhoods can be regenerated, and commercial areas revitalized. However, long term sustainability of the unique character of adjacent residential neighborhoods will require continued patronage of adjacent commercial areas by community residents. Furthermore, places of significant historical interest such as Arlington Heights and Leimert Park demand a thoughtful balance between the desires to preserve and the need for growth. (2-8)

Leimert Park Village is going through some of the traditional indicators of neighborhood improvement. Infrastructure and streets are being improved, sidewalks widened and ADA compliant, trees are undergoing maintenance, and parking signs, street banners, sidewalk plaques and the like are receiving a “design refresh” to reflect the cultural significance of the

²⁵⁴ Mapping L.A. “Leimert Park,” n.d. <https://maps.latimes.com/neighborhoods/neighborhood/leimert-park/index.html>.

²⁵⁵ <https://www.urbandisplacement.org/>

²⁵⁶ Ibid.

area.²⁵⁷ Along with physical improvements, there is a debate on changing the name of “Leimert Park Village” to something that reflects a more cultural identity; “Africa Town.”²⁵⁸

I interviewed a resident of Leimert Park who is a member of the Leimert Park Neighborhood Association. Regarding demographic changes in the residential area they remarked that they do see more affluent White families from the west side of Los Angeles purchasing homes in Leimert Park because they are priced out from properties elsewhere, but their response is “They can’t purchase your home unless you sell it. In some cases, there are families or elders that have aged out of their homes and their offspring are cashing in on the value; Selling homes for \$1 Million dollars when \$40,000 may have been paid for it.”²⁵⁹

The Village is located adjacent to Transit Oriented Development and designated a Pedestrian Oriented Area and part of the Crenshaw Corridor Specific Plan.²⁶⁰ The new Leimert Park Metro Transit station (part of the new K line which has direct access to LAX) had its ribbon cutting in June of 2022. It is scheduled to fully open at the end of 2022.²⁶¹ “The residents of Leimert Park and the Crenshaw Corridor have waited years to see a return on their investment of time, money, and patience since this rail line was first proposed over 30 years ago,” said Metro

²⁵⁷ Submitted on Council District 10 website (PDF on file), 2/01/2022, <https://cd10.lacity.org/articles/updates-leimert-park-village>

²⁵⁸ Proponents of the name change advocate that since Leimert Park is the center of African American culture, the area should mirror how other ethnic groups have their enclaves with names like Little Bangladesh, Little Tokyo, Koreatown, Greektown, etc. Two interviews revealed that there is a tension in the neighborhood between those who support the name change and those who want to leave the name as is to respect the history of the area. Jennings, Angel. “There’s Koreatown. There’s Little Tokyo. So Why Can’t Leimert Park Be Africa Town? Or Wakanda?” Los Angeles Times, May 25, 2018. <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-africa-town-20180525-story.html>

²⁵⁹ From interview - September 3, 2022.

²⁶⁰ Crenshaw Corridor Specific Plan, Maps, Map 3, Page 5. March 2016. <https://planning.lacity.org/odocument/9c539370-063c-43ab-93a2-fa3e1e3e1f93/crenshawmaps.pdf>

²⁶¹ L.A. Metro. “Dedication Held for Leimert Park Station for Crenshaw/LAX Line (K Line).” The Source, June 25, 2022. <https://thesource.metro.net/2022/06/25/dedication-held-for-leimert-park-station-for-crenshaw-lax-line-k-line/>.

Board Chair and L.A. County Supervisor Hilda L. Solis. This new station includes a mosaic mural by famed artist Mickalene Thomas and makes the artists second largest mural.²⁶²

As discussed earlier in this chapter, improved infrastructure, transit, and new housing in divested communities can be fraught. The reaction to these developments is not all positive, and many are worried about “gentrification”, in this case meaning displacement, that could occur in Leimert Park.

“...And before describing the themes guiding Destination Crenshaw, including togetherness, improvisation and dreams, lead historian Larry Earl promised that the project would put an end to cultural erasure in the community...Los Angeles’ African American population has been declining for two decades. In Leimert Park, Black people make up 70% of the population, down from 83% in the 1980s. As gentrification has approached, some residents were concerned that the train would drive up housing prices and catalyze a push-out. The arrival of the light-rail line coincides with development in the area, including a \$500-million renovation of the Baldwin Hills Crenshaw Plaza that will include new retail space and housing, most at market rate.”²⁶³

Concerns about displacement are warranted. With the arrival of the Leimert Park Metro stop some of the commercial landlords have tried to put their buildings on the market, hoping for a large return on the inflated real estate market. This is the case with the commercial building from 4317-4331 Degnan Avenue. Once the tenants realized their building was on the market to be sold and they would most likely be displaced, they eventually mobilized. Wells-Fargo donated \$2.5 Million to help the business owners secure the building²⁶⁴. L.A. County Supervisor, Second District, Holly J. Mitchell allocated \$2 million in funds for the business owners of 4317- 4331 Degnan Boulevard (Figure 58,) to purchase their building under the

²⁶²Hosseinzadeh, Maryam. “New Video: Mickalene Thomas Mural Installed at Leimert Park Station.” The Source, July 20, 2022. <https://thesource.metro.net/2022/07/20/new-video-mickalene-thomas-mural-installed-at-leimert-park-station/>.

²⁶³ Easter, Makeda. “Destination Crenshaw Art Project Aims to Reclaim the Neighborhood for Black L.A.” Los Angeles Times, January 30, 2019. <https://www.latimes.com/entertainment/arts/la-et-cm-destination-crenshaw-20190130-story.html>.

²⁶⁴ From business owner interview, September 14, 2022

Countywide Anti-Displacement Commercial Property Acquisition Program²⁶⁵. The program allocates funds to businesses who are at risk of displacement and aims to promote “community stability and build wealth”.²⁶⁶ The previous owner of the building BarKochba “BK” Botach, an arms dealer, who reportedly let the building fall into disrepair.²⁶⁷ The Black Owned and Operated Community Land Trust closed on the building September 12, 2022.²⁶⁸

The intent of the new owners is to redevelop the building from a single story to a five-story building, with commercial usage and retail on the bottom floor, and microbusinesses on the second floor; but the groups ideas must be presented to the community, and ultimately provide what the community thinks is needed. I spoke with one of the buildings business owners who says the “purpose is to provide affordable space for entrepreneurs. We don’t believe people should be spending sixty percent of their income on rent, and unfortunately that is the case in most of our community.”²⁶⁹ With the purchase of this building, all the commercial property in Leimert Park Village is 100% Black owned, with Mark Bradford and Allan DiCastro as the largest property owners.

But in Leimert Park, even minor changes may engender suspicion and assumptions. “Unfortunately, Leimert Park is a community where change is the enemy.” Said one business owner in an interview. According to the LA Times article “A turning point for Leimert Park

²⁶⁵ mitchell.lacounty.gov. “LA County Supervisor Holly J. Mitchell | Board Moves to Establish a Countywide Anti-Displacement Program for Small Businesses Owned by Women and People of Color and Pilots Initiative to Combat Corporate Real Estate Speculation in Historic Leimert Park,” July 26, 2022.

<https://mitchell.lacounty.gov/countywide-anti-displacement-program/>.

²⁶⁶ Ibid

²⁶⁷ Reese, Greg. “Is South LA Arms Merchant an Asset to the Community?” Our Weekly, April 21, 2016.

<https://ourweekly.com/news/2016/04/21/south-la-arms-merchant-asset-community/>.

and Alpert Reyes, Emily. “South L.A. Gun Dealer Is Convicted for Illegally Selling Pistols.” Los Angeles Times, April 14, 2016. <https://www.latimes.com/local/lanow/la-me-ln-gun-dealer-convicted-20160413-story.html>.

²⁶⁸ From business owner interview, September 14, 2022

²⁶⁹ From business owner interview, September 14, 2022

Village”, Leimert Park residents blocked the construction of a multi-media studio and a 500-unit apartment complex.²⁷⁰

I interviewed the Executive Director of a Leimert Park based public arts and cultural production organization. They have worked in and around Leimert Park since 2008:

“You’ve got all the buildings owned by Black people, that’s really the monumental thing. They have the opportunity to really promote Blackness through what’s on offer in the spaces. I think that purchase of the building on Degnan and 43rd was really significant in stabilizing the neighborhood. With that said, one of the challenges is not the commercial areas but in the residential areas, is people just selling their homes [to people not from the area.]”

They later remarked “There are plenty of people who don’t like Destination Crenshaw and question the Councilman’s²⁷¹ approach in doing that when there are so many other issues in the district. So, there’s a lot of hard work, I think, around Destination Crenshaw and Art + Practice for that matter.”

Another member of the collective that purchased their commercial building has been in Los Angeles since the early 90s, and in their business location for eight years. They remark about the changes in the area:

“There was a lot of small businesses prior to me being here, there was a person that sold clothing, there was a couple of food stores next to the Vision Theater, a couple of coffee spots and tea spots, but once the conversation about the train [Metro] started to happen all the rents started going up. It seemed as soon as they announced the train station was going to be in Leimert Park all the rents went up and people who had businesses here [for a long time] had to shut down. There are a lot of businesses that shut down within the past 10-15 years...It was really desolate. What really kept Leimert Park going was the drum circle that happened every Sunday. People eventually started to bring food and jewelry, and other vendors started to pop up. When Mark Bradford bought the property, the conversation started to turn to gentrification, because a lot of people didn’t know who brought the property...“I hear these folks having issues with development and making things better within the community, and every time

²⁷⁰ Jennings, Angel. “A Turning Point for Leimert Park Village.” Los Angeles Times. Los Angeles Times, February 10, 2014. <https://www.latimes.com/local/la-me-leimert-park-village-20140210-story.html>

²⁷¹ Councilman Marqueece Harris-Dawson, LA District Council Member District #8

something was happening in the community, [the sentiment] was its gentrification. But I'm saying, "Yo! Mark Bradford is Black! He's improving the facades of these buildings. I remember asking the question to some, like "So Black people can't have good sh*t?! We can't do things for ourselves and make things better for ourselves? Why is it when things improve it's only because White people are fixing it up to kick us out?"

There are other issues of interest irrespective of gentrification in The Village. Results of a community meeting attended on December 15, 2022 revealed there was a homeless population in Leimert Park Village, and it naturally created a concern for businesses. The reaction was many business owners felt they had lost customers due to managing safety and sanitation from the unhoused population, general cleaning and trash removal, and the city was not giving enough support. The community felt that it has suffered because council members have changed three times in recent years. Three to four city representatives were in attendance. A representative from Art + Practice was not at this meeting, which was noticed and mentioned by some of the business owners present.

PERCEPTION AND IMPACTS

Three community members that I interviewed felt that Art + Practice was not transparent enough about their activities as it relates to the organization being a major property owner in the area. One interviewee stated "There was no communication with the community. There is a lot of property they have that is not being activated. Some of the properties they do own, they are not transparent. They say they don't own it [sic] but people are saying they do." Some that I interviewed also shared the idea that Art + Practice was facilitating The Hammer Museum, of UCLA, to have multiple spaces in Leimert Park. This perception is understandable since Art + Practice holds a significant amount of real estate in the area, some of which is not currently occupied, that those outside of the organization have speculation as to if there are more covert plans for the business block. Community members learned about alleged plans for a new Hammer Museum outpost from a Leimert Park community member. Some interviewees thought it was a positive thing, but others perceived it as a problem because it represents a White cultural institution taking over the area.

My independent research showed no indicators that Art + Practice had any partnership that lasted after 2016, but there was strong belief that the Hammer Museum would occupy spaces in buildings that Art + Practice owned. The Hammer Museum is based out of the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). The suspicion may be understood if not warranted, since universities and large institutions (like University of Houston and University of Chicago mentioned in the previous chapters) are often considered gentrifying forces in neighborhoods. Art+Practice director Sophia Belsheim confirmed that the collaboration with the Hammer Museum was for the duration of 2014-2016; a two-year partnership with the intent of teaching A+P how to manage exhibitions and public programs. Afterward, A+P felt it would “make the most sense” to begin collaborating with CAAM, since their missions of celebrating artists of color aligned.

Some critiques of Art + Practice is that although they have brought museum quality art to the neighborhood they have not been “present” enough in recognizing the needs of artists in the neighborhood. One interviewee remarked “Sometimes I feel they may have a vision of Leimert Park that does not include the folks who are already here.” Another said “I think there are ways to work inclusively in the community, so they tend to lack as much community involvement. I think it’s important that they don’t become the czars of art in our community and should be more inclusive.”

A member of the Leimert Park Neighborhood Association offered their perception of Mark Bradford and Art + Practice:

“I applaud him for coming back and having an impact. I think that vision has been hamstrung a bit by the sense of proprietorship in the community. Some people say “I’ve been here longer” or “You should do this...” They have an idea of what should be done or how to carry out an idea. But that’s just it. They have opinions. All agents of change, which is what Mark is, will run into the inertia or turbulence of “We like it the way it is.” “We don’t understand how this is going to impact us.” or “This is different from what we’ve always done”...A lot of times [fine] art is seen as a luxury, something for only the rich to partake, but not for working or middle class people... I think that it’s

a positive because if you can't see it, you can't become it. Sometimes that is the gap in our community is that sometimes we don't dream big enough. Mark could have built a house or a venue somewhere else, but he decided to come back. That's brave."

I asked one of the Leimert Park Village business owners what they thought of the impact of Art + Practice:

"This is a cultural arts district, so it's great to have the art gallery here displaying Black Art. I have visited the artist talks where the artists that they display talk to the community, a lot of the times I don't even know when things are happening, I just see it happening so I will go and see it. When they do have art openings you tend to see a lot of people from outside of the community come through and then leave, and part of that stems from there are not enough things to engage with them when they come, there is not enough to make them stay, so we have some work to do on that to bring the businesses to that level."

CONCLUSIONS

At present Art + Practice seems to be staying consistent with its mission and trying to stay above the fray of neighborhood concern and debate, some will say to its detriment. It will be interesting to see how it develops stronger ties with the neighborhood as the Metro opens and more people from outside of Leimert Park have access and bringing the rest of the world, and more money, to the area. From the interviews It is not apparent if their presence has added or taken away from the social cohesion of the Leimert Park, because like the Third Ward, the community was already close knit. Art + Practice's vision is very clear and focused on where it puts its energy, which is where they seemed to have the largest impact. Their partnerships with the RightWay Foundation and First Place for Youth have facilitated those organizations to mitigate homelessness and offer stability for a vulnerable population. Their partnership with Pila Global gives art education to children internationally. But arguably, the biggest effect that they have had on the area is by Bradford and DiCastro's ownership of the commercial buildings, which minimized the possibility of large chains moving into "The Village" and changing the character of the neighborhood.

5

Analysis



Figure 69 The artists at work. (top) Rick Lowe in his studio. Photo by Michael Starghill (middle) Theaster Gates at *Soul Manufacturing Corporation* exhibit, 2012. Image in Public Domain. (bottom) Mark Bradford installing *Finding Barry* (study for Lobby Wall installation), 2015 at the Hammer Museum. Photo by Jay L. Clendenin. Courtesy of the Los Angeles Times.

Case Study Artist Overview

| | Rick Lowe | Theaster Gates | Mark Bradford |
|--|---|--|---|
| Birth Year | 1961 | 1973 | 1961 |
| Education | Columbus College (now Columbus State University), Georgia, USA, 1982 | Iowa State University, Iowa, USA (B.S. Urban planning + Ceramics), 1996, (M.S.) 2006 University of Cape Town, South Africa (M.A. Fine Arts + Religious Studies), 1998 | California Institute of the Arts, California, USA (B. Fine Arts), 1995 (M. Fine Arts), 1997 |
| Artist Medium | Painting Installations | Ceramics, Video installation, Sculpture, Performance art | Paper collage, Video installation, Sculpture, Performance art |
| Gallery Representation | Gagosian | Gagosian White Cube | Hauser & Wirth |
| University Affiliations | University of Houston | University of Chicago | N/A |
| Professional Affiliations (Museum exhibits, International shows.) | Partial list: Phoenix Art Museum (Phoenix, AZ) Contemporary Arts Museum (Houston, TX) Museum of Contemporary Arts, Los Angeles; Neuberger Museum, Purchase, New York; Gwangju Biennale (Gwangju, Korea); Museum of Fine Arts (Houston, TX); Venice Architecture Biennale (Venice, Italy) | Partial list: New Museum (New York, NY); Museum of Contemporary Art (Chicago, IL); Victoria & Albert Museum (London); Perez Art Museum (Miami, FL); National Gallery of Art (Washington, DC); Fondazione Prada (Milan, Italy); Venice Biennale: Arts + Architecture (Venice, Italy) | Partial list: Hammer Museum (Los Angeles, CA); Baltimore Museum of Art (Baltimore, MD); Museo de Arte de Zapopan, (Guadalajara, Mexico); Hirshhorn Museum and Sculpture Garden, (Washington, DC); Venice Arts Biennale (Venice, Italy) |

Figure 70 Artist Overview

This chapter focuses on an analysis of the artists and case study organizations. I briefly review the rationale and real estate acquisition steps that led to their establishment. I explore how these organizations have demonstrated the common practices of arts-based development. In this chapter of cross-case analysis, it is essential to compare the similarities and differences between the organizations. I discuss their current number of properties, organizational areas of concentration, and confirm through concrete examples how these projects follow best practices for social determinants of health as listed by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services. This includes expanded definitions and clarifies the significance and impact of each organization's social work. Then, I delve into the findings from the interviews and examine the perceptions of each organization, categorized by the prominent themes that emerged. These themes include social cohesion, cultural preservation, and the importance of Black space. Finally, I give areas for further research.

In the case study chapter 4, I have provided a detailed description of each artist's background, creative medium, neighborhood ties, university and practice affiliations, and the impetus for creating each case study organization. I have framed these projects as extensions of their art practices or, for years in the case of Rick Lowe, primary art practice. Figure 70 summarizes some of this information.

It is important to review the methods of acquiring the properties and the reason for establishment. Seven artists, frustrated with the scarcity of opportunities to show their work and a desire to promote “revolutionary change,”²⁷⁴ worked to create a venue that promoted community. Project Row Houses acquired the original 22 row houses from a private owner under a five-year lease to own agreement with financial assistance from the National Endowment for the Arts and small-scale fundraising. The Heimbender Foundation funded the rest of the acquisition. Finally, the Andy Warhol Foundation helped PRH pay off its mortgage in 2001. Theaster Gates purchased a home in Grand Crossing and wanted to create additional

²⁷⁴ Quote from Jesse Lot, p 67.

space that would house and celebrate collections he acquired from noted Chicago landmarks and institutions. The Rebuild Foundation began with the renovation of two small properties through personal/borrowed investment. Funds from Gates' growing art practice helped fund the purchase of additional buildings. Later, Rebuild used proceeds from art (creating marble art bonds), public financing, and loans to renovate Stony Island Arts Bank (the organization's flagship and most well-known project). Next, there were Hope VI loans and additional financing from larger foundations to fund projects that were gradually increasing in scale. Mark Bradford, Allan DiCastro, and Eileen Harris Norton wanted to create an organization that showcased first-class African American art and would support foster youth. Properties were bought with the artists' personal finances and given to the organization to create the Art + Practice campus.

How did these organizations comply with specific tenets of arts-development? The four fundamental practices (anchoring, activating, fixing, and planning) have been followed by PRH, Rebuild, and A+P in a variety of forms. I consider these tenets to be foundational, and though some could suggest others, I believe it is reasonable to adhere to the practices outlined by ArtPlace America. **Anchoring:** all three organizations have become anchor institutions in their areas. They have also indirectly developed their neighborhoods into cultural districts or became bridges to become cultural corridors as in the case of Stony Island Arts Bank connecting the Obama Center to the Regal Theater in Chicago. **Activating:** Project Row Houses has created public space in the private realm through the renovation of the original properties, and also activates public space with the food and art markets. I have classified as partially activating in Table 8 because the spaces that are activated are private rather than public. Rebuild does the same creating public spaces in private buildings but also created Kenwood Gardens from 13 vacant lots. Art+Practice makes private space open to the public, although half of its properties are not open to the public. **Fixing:** all the organizations have done this by default by the reuse and beautification of derelict spaces. **Planning:** only Project Row Houses involves the neighborhood in the discussions of neighborhood

directions. Rebuild and Art + Practice are more artist-led visions for the neighborhood, which offers pitfalls. Some of these pitfalls are skepticism and distrust.

| | Project Row Houses | Rebuild Foundation | Art +Practice |
|-------------------|--------------------|--------------------|---------------|
| Anchoring | ● | ● | ● |
| Activating | ○ | ● | |
| Fixing | ● | ● | ● |
| Planning | ● | | |

Anchoring - Stable community organization, contributes to neighborhood identity, brings jobs and tourism.
 Activating - Bringing performance and activities to public space, adding safety to public outdoor space
 Fixing - Encourages beautification, engagement, and new uses to existing and dilapidated spaces
 Planning - Engages residents in neighborhood planning process

Table 8 The four practices of arts organizations and creative placemaking compared by organization.

To continue the analysis, I compare the organization’s similarities and differences in neighborhood and programmatic offerings and operational structures.

CASE SIMILARITIES AND DIFFERENCES

We should first look at all three organizations as they exist in 2023. They all have multiple properties, and incorporate art with either methods of community building, entrepreneurship, or helping vulnerable populations (see Figure 71).

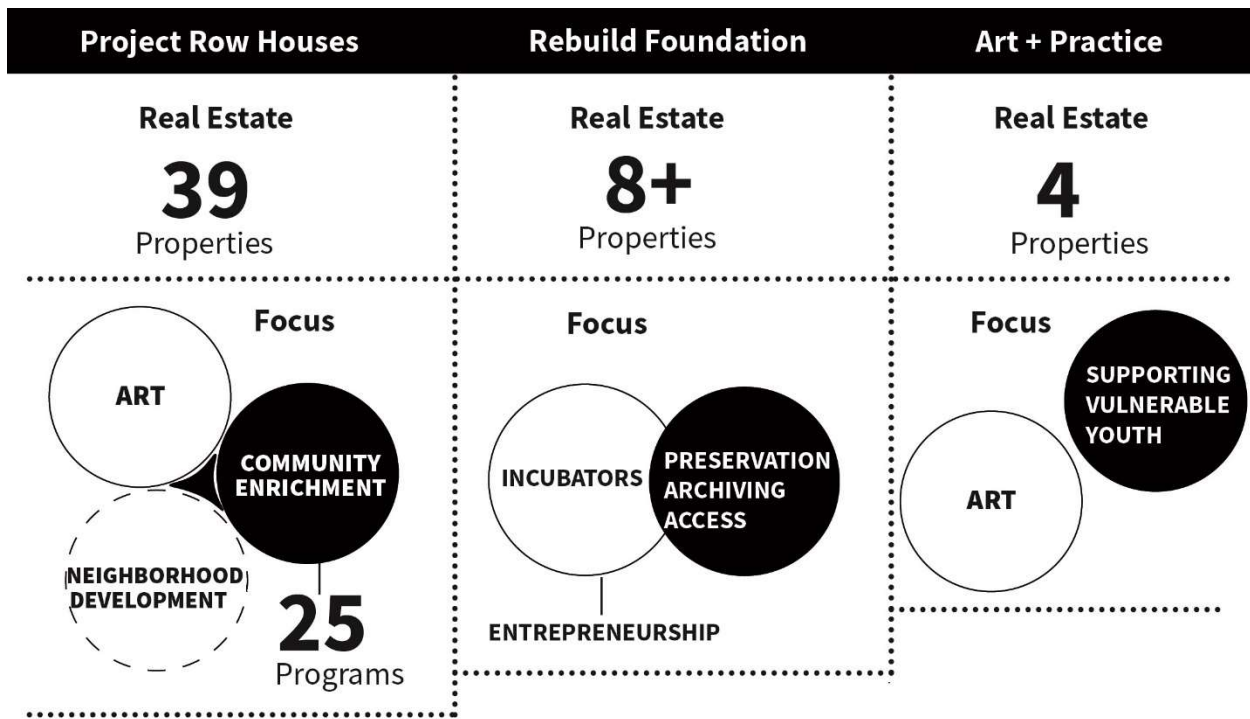


Figure 71 Comparison of organizational properties and areas of concentration

Project Row Houses and the Rebuild Foundation provide housing as part of their offerings. Art+Practice does not have housing in their program, although indirectly through their substantial support of First Place for Youth. First Place for Youth helps to find housing and education for youth who are transitioning out of the foster care system.

Project Row Houses and Art + Practice were established to pair art with social services. There is no indication that Rebuild began with similar intentions.

Rebuild and Art + Practice utilizes external partnerships with individuals and other organizations to create programming. PRH initiates more of its own programming with F.A.C.E. and Building Blocks for Creative Careers programs.

Rebuild and PRH rely heavily on support from foundations and large institutions. A+P does as well, but not to the same extent. Because they offer less programming, it seems they are

more reliant on self-funding or funding from only a few sources, although they do rely on large museums for artist and exhibit programs, and in their first two years for operational assistance.

All the organizations are location focused; each artist serves as a representative for their community and all artists reside or are from these neighborhoods.

Lowe and Gates have committed to arts redevelopment/creative placemaking projects in other cities outside of their home base. Figures 72 and 73 show a listing of the arts redevelopment or creative placemaking projects the artists have worked on.

PRH offers far more programming and initiatives to benefit their neighborhood residents and artists through their Community Enrichment work.

PRH is much more politically active than the other two organizations. PRH takes a more active role in the development of the Third Ward with its work with the EEDC. With Rebuild I didn't see any evidence of a political or policy involvement, outside of the physical development and preservation of the buildings of Grand Crossing. Likewise, A+P has not listed any involvement in the politics of the neighborhood, instead focusing on its mission of helping youth.

PRH offers an extensive array of community programming that caters to a wide range of publics including the elderly, teenagers, and everything in between, which makes sense as they are more established. Rebuild offers community programming as well, but fewer are targeted specifically for the elderly. Events that accommodate older people include various lectures, Sunday Service by DJ Powell and activities at Kenwood Gardens. Art+Practice offers minimal community programs, and more supportive initiatives, except artist talks and gallery tours.

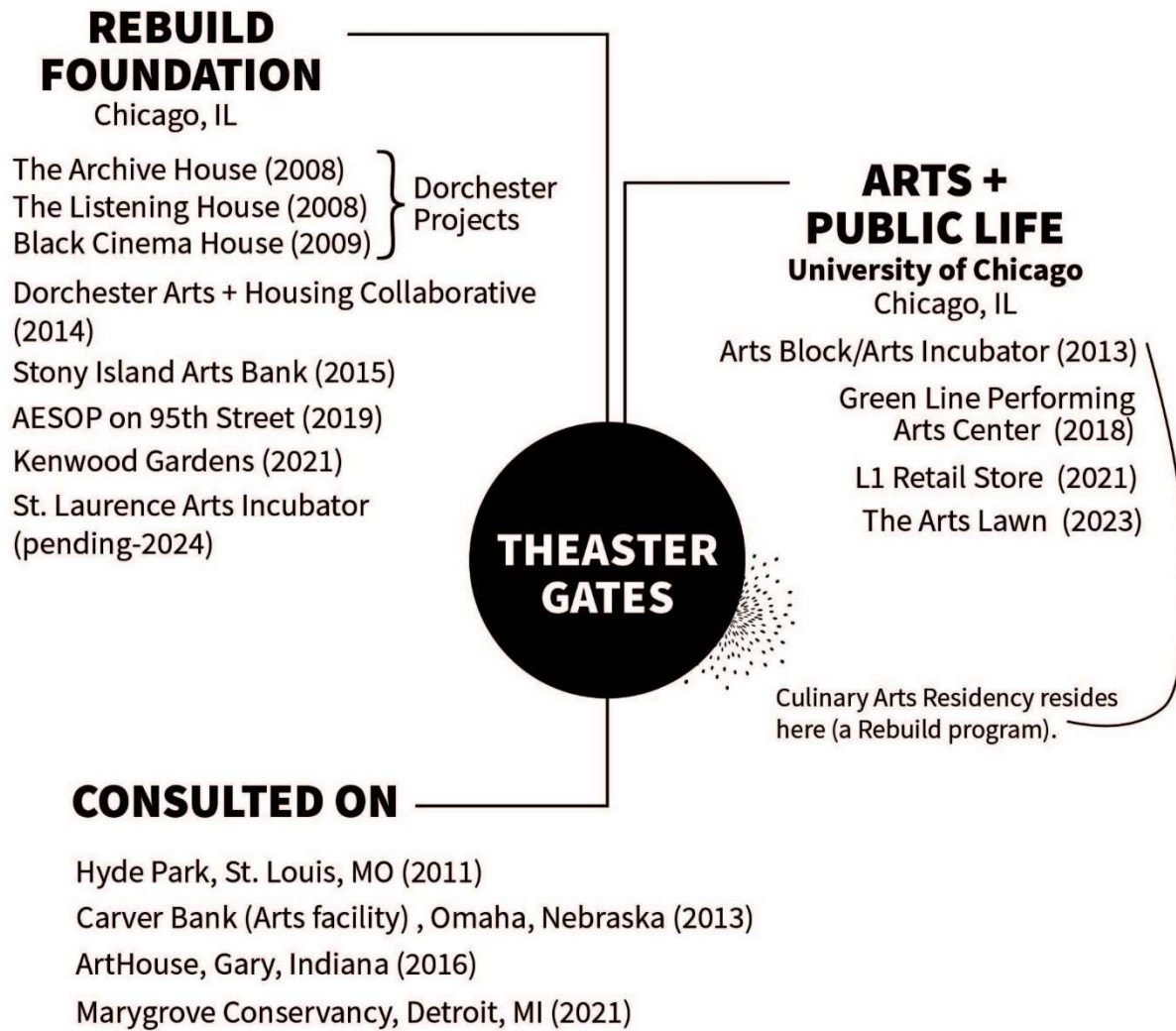


Figure 72 Theaster Gates Community Development Built Projects

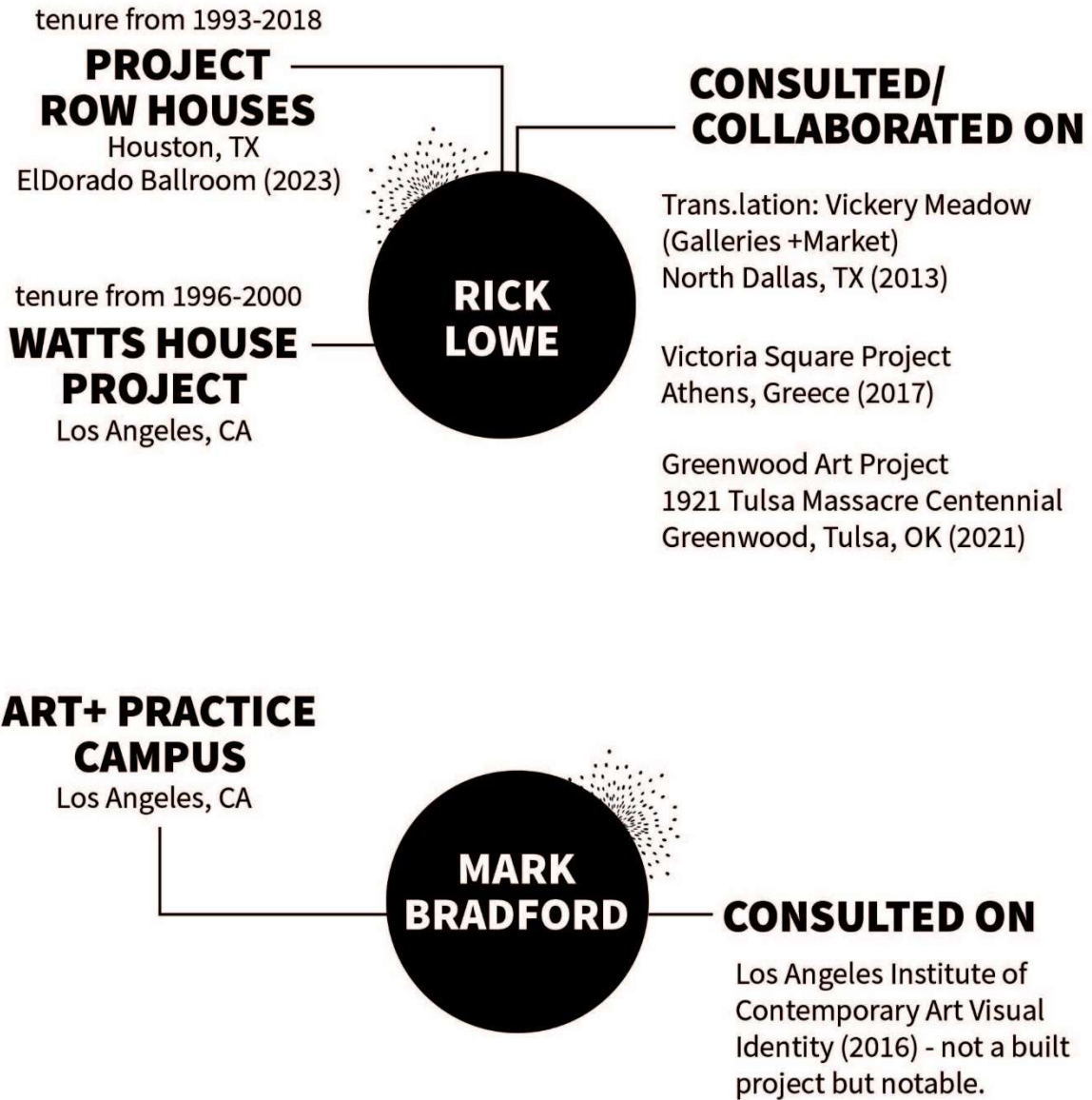


Figure 73 Rick Lowe and Mark Bradford Community Development Built Projects

SOCIAL DETERMINANTS OF HEALTH (SDoH)

Were my assumptions correct that these projects improved the social determinants of health in their neighborhoods? Let's examine each factor individually and compare it with organizational activities and perceptions from interviewees.

Education Access and Quality. This would be defined as the presence of educational opportunities and help children and adolescents do well in school.²⁷⁵ I have expanded the definition to include educational programs for all ages. Each organization has achieved this through partnerships with individuals, small organizations, and large institutions:

1. Project Row Houses offers educational programs for the entire community. They provide after school tutoring, life-long learning through computer and digital literacy classes for adults, plus gives students from various local colleges and universities opportunities to exhibit as a part of the summer studios program.
2. Rebuild partners with The Odyssey Project (with the support of Illinois Humanities) giving income restricted students access to college courses in Art History, Writing, Literature, Philosophy, and Critical Thinking from the University of Illinois Chicago.
3. Art + Practice is in a two-year agreement with PILAGlobal, an organization that offers education to refugee children worldwide. Their partnership with First Place for Youth facilitates many educational opportunities, job skills, and housing for the students FP4Y serves. A part of that is their \$100,000 scholarship program (A+P Scholars). A+P also works with Los Angeles County schools to provide visits and on-site arts education.

Those I interviewed only discussed the educational initiatives in the case of Project Row Houses. Some reported hearing neighborhood talk of wanting the organization to offer more opportunities for youth not enrolled at a local college or university to exhibit on-

²⁷⁵ by the U.S Department of Health and Human Services-CDC and the Healthy People 2030 Initiative from Chapter 3: Research Design and Methodology. All SDoH in this dissertation will use these definitions and in some cases add to them.

site. I took that feedback with a grain of salt as I read reports of past neighborhood residents who became famous artists like Angelbert Metoyer, who began his artistic career at PRH. I could not conceive that Metoyer was an isolated case.

Neighborhood/Built Environment, defined as neighborhoods and environments that promote health and safety. In this dissertation, in addition to looking at the presence of safe housing and neighborhoods, I emphasize the application of cultural and physical anti-displacement initiatives such as housing creation and property acquisition. These can help preserve neighborhood character and social cohesion:

1. Project Row Houses is the most prominent case of the three. Part of PRH's mission is to preserve the character of the Third Ward, and it shares that mission with the EEDC. Through the EEDC (Emancipation Economic Development Council) there has been a concerted effort to minimize the displacement of long standing Third Ward residents. The EEDC's advocacy and support of policy with the mayor's office worked to improve infrastructure, housing, and small business generation in the Third Ward. PRH Preservation has renovated and purchased homes of elderly residents of the Third Ward to enable them to age in place. Row House CDC has established over 70 housing units in the neighborhood. PRH Young Mothers Residential Program has provided over 100 women with housing while they pursue educational and job training.
2. Rebuild has renovated multiple properties in Grand Crossing, sustaining the architectural character of the area and minimizing disrepair. Rebuild has transformed 13 decayed and vacant city lots into Kenwood Gardens. The Rebuild Foundation has created more than 30 units of housing through the Dorchester Art+ Housing Collaborative.
3. Mark Bradford (providing the campus for Art+Practice) is the largest property owner in Leimert Park Village. Whether Bradford acquired these properties solely for the purpose of creating Art+Practice is uncertain. While it's feasible that he originally obtained them for personal reasons, as they hold sentimental value to him, the result

is it's challenging for non-local businesses to infiltrate and alter the area's original character of Black-owned small businesses.

Interviewees did mention that PRH has had an impact on the Third Ward by its involvement with the EEDC but questioned its effectiveness in influencing policy. Interviewees did express approval of Mark Bradford's property ownership but were concerned about what his objectives were and felt there was a lack of communication or deep involvement in The Village from Art + Practice.

Social and Community Context would be defined as opportunities for social and community support. I am including in this definition the perception of informal support networks and social interaction. These can lead to neighborhood/community pride and social cohesion:

1. Interviews of individuals who have visited or interacted with Project Row Houses, Rebuild, or Art+Practice show the organizations have strengthened community bonds as social and cultural (art, music, food, and ethnic) anchors to their neighborhoods. Interviews showed examples of emotional support, social connections and relationships being formed, and impressions of these organizations as part of community identity. A few interviews felt a less vital connection to the projects or questioned these artists' intent, but most interviews had a positive view. Community connections, like neighborhood religious organizations or educational facilities, could be found elsewhere. Still, those opportunities would be to targeted demographics, and these organizations present the chance to influence a larger swath of the community.

This is the area where I received the most positive feedback and will be discussed further in the "Perceptions From Interviews" section of my analysis.

Economic Stability is defined as helping people earn steady incomes that allow them to meet their needs and can be achieved through job and career training, financial education, and housing. I have already covered housing as a portion of economic stability in the Neighborhood/Built Environment section.

1. All organizations have offered some form of Artist and Career training. PRH has the Building Blocks for Creative Careers under the Community Enrichment arm that offers how to write grants, legal help for artists and neighborhood residents, estate planning, workshops to learn about credit and financial management, and investment through the F.A.C.E program. PRH has a small business incubation program. Rebuild has hosted many artist entrepreneurship workshops and offered small businesses a temporary brick and mortar space through the Culinary Incubator at the Retreat at Currency Exchange. Art+Practice partnered with First Place for Youth to put on a job and resource fair in 2023.
2. These projects may have helped with the economic stability of the neighborhood through business incubation and cultural tourism. These organizations are prominent because of Lowe, Gates, and Bradford's profiles (especially in the art world). This would bring people into these areas who may not regularly visit, especially because they have begun to create cultural districts. I do not have evidence of how much each effort has generated economically for each neighborhood or if it would be substantial. To know this, it would require a different research methodology and examining these areas over time.

There was little to no discussion on the financial stability of these initiatives from interviewees, but I attribute that to a smaller pool of interview participants.

Healthcare Access and Quality would be achieved by access to comprehensive, high-quality healthcare services and health-related programming (including nutrition, exercise, and wellness) and by partnering with other organizations and institutions. While I do not have information about the outcomes of these activities they were perceived as beneficial by interviewees:

1. PRH offers health screenings and partners with Third Ward organizations to provide referrals and health resources. Through the Urban Harvest Mobile Farmers Market and Mobile Market, they offer fresh food in the Northern Third Ward which is considered low-income with low access to fresh food according to the USDA Economic Research Service.²⁷⁶ PRH conducts art therapy workshops, online seminars for senior citizens about medication management and aging care, in addition to mental healthcare.
2. Rebuild has offered weekly yoga classes in its facilities and in Kenwood Gardens since 2015. In addition, they offer West African and Afro-Cuban dance classes at Dorchester Art+ Housing Collaborative (the schedule varies). Rebuild's annual work with the Frankie Knuckles Foundation fundraises for HIV and diabetes causes.
3. Art + Practice has provided up to \$200 in grocery store gift cards and food to students from First Place for Youth during May 2020 of the pandemic.

Interviews showed that residents responded to health/wellness initiatives and saw them as integral to offerings of the neighborhood, especially yoga, art therapy, dance classes, and food distribution. Interviews discussed the high participation in wellness related classes and food assistance offered during and after the COVID-19 pandemic of 2020.

²⁷⁶ USDA. "USDA ERS - Go to the Atlas." Usda.gov, 2012. <https://www.ers.usda.gov/data-products/food-access-research-atlas/go-to-the-atlas/>.

PERCEPTIONS FROM INTERVIEWS

General opinions are that all three have helped maintain their neighborhoods' culture by celebrating their areas' people, culture, architecture, and food. There were eight prominent themes that I extracted from the interviews (see Figure 74).

Social Cohesion, Cultural Preservation, Spatial Agency, and Community Pride

Some of the most predominant themes in the interviews were ideas of Black spaces, cultural identity, specificity of place (i.e. pride in the history and culture of specific neighborhoods), and connection. Leimert Park, Grand Crossing, and the Third Ward were White communities before the 1930s, but when African Americans moved in, they became safe spaces for Black people and Black expression. Specifically, these enclaves were known as strongholds of Black spatial agency, community, and creativity in Leimert Park and the Third Ward. How have these organizations contributed to the ideas of Black spatial agency? Partially by celebrating Black culture to assert Black ownership over physical space. These art spaces and organizations are open to everyone to enjoy and be a part of, but they are centered on rejoicing and honoring the lived experiences of African Americans. All three organizations lionize local and national Black culture.

During interviews, many individuals expressed the importance of being able to truly be themselves and feel seen during their interactions with others at the organization. While Black art served as a way to see their experiences reflected, the interviewees predominantly emphasized the value of community, acceptance, and a culture of care. Through various events like Sunday Service, meditation sessions, yoga, block parties, and mentorship mixers, they felt ample support systems and opportunities for social cohesion and connection. I would summarize the strengths of Project Row Houses as being hyper-local, wholistic (concerned with the total physical, mental, emotional, and financial needs of the

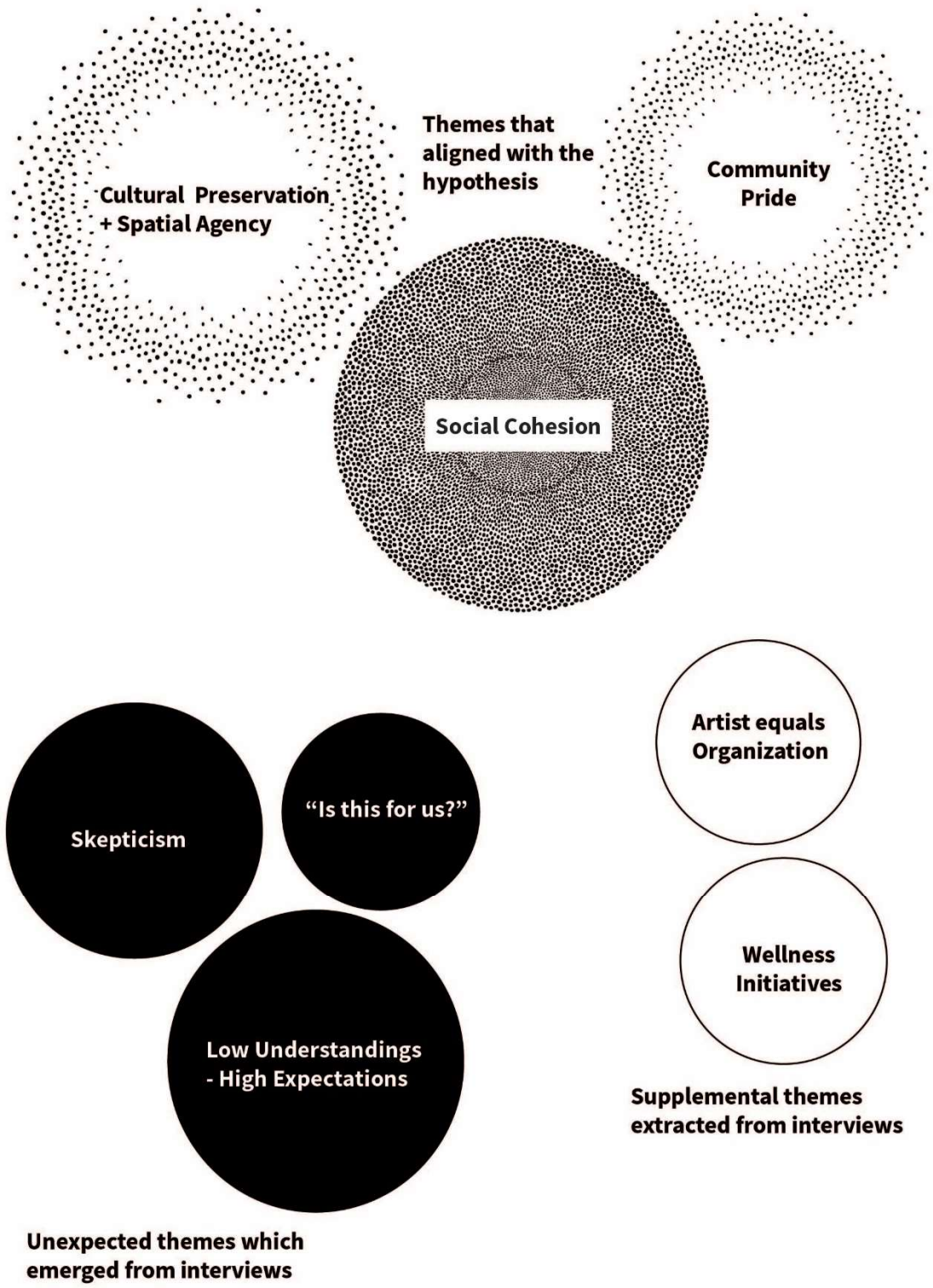


Figure 74 Prominent themes found in perceptions across the three case studies.

population), concerned with preserving Black space and tending to have more exhibits (Rounds) talking about social issues like Black Lives Matter, Critical Race Theory, and more.

The Rebuild Foundation splits its focus to the preservation of Chicago institutions (Frankie Knuckles Collection, Prairie Avenue Book Shop, and Johnson Publications), partnering with other small Black institutions, and promoting Black creatives and creative entrepreneurs from Chicago. They also focus on celebrated international and local artists through the Mellon Foundation, their Black Artist Retreat, Dorchester Experimental Lab, etc. that includes Chicago, national, and international artists. The strengths of Rebuild are a local and diasporic approach, a balance between preservation and creating Black space and entrepreneurship for Black creatives and interwoven with Gates's artistic practice. One can see his philosophies manifesting in the approach of the organization.

The strengths of Art+ Practice look like targeted and well-calculated activism, maintaining Black ownership of Leimert Park Village, and a diasporic Black artistic showcase. Their support of First Place for Youth aids mostly local Black and Brown youth in South Central Los Angeles.

Low understandings-High Expectations, Skepticism, and “Is this for us?”

Throughout my interviews, I discovered some intriguing and unexpected perceptions. Certain interviewees seemed perplexed by the actions of the artists during the early stages of their organizations' establishment and questioned their intentions. However, a few years down the line, some criticized the organizations for either not doing enough or focusing on the wrong things. Although communication played a significant role, what caught my attention was the lack of understanding of the artist's objectives. Once the organization was running, people expected it to solve systemic neighborhood problems, or they blamed the artists for not providing enough resources to the neighborhood. Occasionally, there was the notion that portions of these organizations weren't really for the occupants of the neighborhood, but to

cater to others coming from outside of the area. There was also the question of partnering with larger institutions. Quotes like “I believe he is a Trojan Horse for...” or “He’s making way for [insert institution here] to come in the neighborhood.” This was especially evident with Rebuild and Art+Practice. I cover more of this topic in the “Community Building Dynamics” section of the conclusion.

It is not uncommon for individuals to not understand what an artist’s intentions are and be skeptical in the early stages of community development. Artists bring creativity and innovation, often leading to the development of unique programs and initiatives that may be new for a neighborhood. However, as these organizations grow, some people begin to expect them to solve systemic issues that plague the neighborhood including access to public transportation and infrastructure improvements. This expectation is often directed towards the artists, who are not equipped to handle such problems alone. By appreciating the value of artists in community development and understanding their limitations, we can work towards building a stronger and more collaborative community.

Artist equals organization

I found that there was little distinction in perception between the organization and the artists themselves. In most cases discussions regarding organizations frequently revolved around their founders, even if they had minimal involvement in the daily operations; this occurred when discussing all three organizations. This is understandable since each institution is a reflection of the founders’ goals and in some ways an extension of their art practices. Nevertheless, such conversations explore the organization's actions and affiliations, as well as each artist's personality and professional associations.

Wellness Initiatives

The semi-structured interviews also discussed wellness programming, though not as fully as in the other categories. As far as being community-facing wellness programs, PRH does this

the most with education, healthcare clinics, food distribution, and legal services; the F.A.C.E. (Financial, Artistic, Career, and Empowerment) program is focused on the needs of the Third Ward residents, especially those with housing, educational, and nutritional needs.

Interviewees commented that PRH has worked to “improve the quality of life” of its neighborhood in Houston. I have already discussed many of the wellness initiatives of Rebuild in the “Healthcare Access and Quality” Social Determinants of Health preceding this section.

OPPORTUNITIES FOR ADDITIONAL RESEARCH

This dissertation looked at perceptions from a distinct pool of individuals, but the idea of artist-developers deserves to be studied much further. Further research could examine the impact of artists of color in smaller to mid-size cities like New Haven, Connecticut. Titus Kaphar, a titan in the art world, keeps a loose partnership with Yale and neighborhood health organizations for his NXTHVN arts incubator. There is an opportunity to examine these organizations' economic impacts on the housing market and local businesses over 20 to 30 years. Many people I interviewed were in proximity (physical or relational) to the organizations. As I stated in Chapter 3, these organizations had an extensive reach, so I had to search for varied opinions, not just positive ones. While that offered insight, I could have received more varied reviews if I had more time and used a different research methodology. This could include surveys, focus groups, or interviews with more people not directly connected to the organizations being studied. The organizations are far-reaching, so it speaks to their outreach and connection to the community, and it will take much work to get unbiased opinions. In addition, there is the opportunity to cast a wider net and understand how these projects are viewed in relation to the larger city, having a larger pool of interview subjects. A study with a more extended timeframe and more participants would be informative of these organizations as community anchors.

A second area for future work would be how to develop policy implications from this research. One potential recommendation is expanding the 21st Century Community Learning Centers Program as suggested by the organizations that signed the Arts and Cultural Sector: Federal Policy Actions petition in February 2021.²⁷⁷ The Community Learning Centers Program provides after-school educational enrichment opportunities for students. If the case study organizations could receive additional funding to have art-based after school programs for children, that would also improve community relationships. Project Row Houses already has a robust tutoring and art program for children, teens, and adults but could always use more support. I did not see any evidence of after school programs for young children in the Rebuild Foundation's multiplicity of programs, but they do partner with the middle school South Shore Fine Arts Academy in Grand Crossing. Art+Practice already supports refugee children via PILAGlobal and school tours with the Los Angeles school system, but adding an after-school program for local children would be beneficial. Of course, funding support would have to include additional staff and organizational adjustments, but as art programs are cut in many schools, these social art organizations could help to fill in the need and earn goodwill from the neighborhood.

²⁷⁷ "The Arts and Cultural Sector: Federal Policy Actions," February 3, 2021. https://apap365.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/09/Arts-Federal-Policy-Actions_BidenHarris_2021.pdf.

6

Conclusion

In this conclusion, I answer my research questions and discuss the organization's missions versus perceptions. I discuss some obstacles and propose metrics of efficacy that can be used to analyze similar or future artist-led arts-based community development projects. I offer observations for the three organizations, analyzing the initial conditions that facilitated the success of these projects. I discuss the expected community building dynamics involved with these social practice projects and highlight the differentiating factors that set these artist-developers apart from other developers in their own words. I end with my final reflections on this research.

ANSWERS TO RESEARCH QUESTIONS

I began this dissertation with two main questions:

1. How are nationally lauded arts-based development projects perceived in their communities in terms of neighborhood outcomes, including displacement and culture loss in African American areas?
2. What can be learned about the potential for such arts-based initiatives to benefit their local communities?

To answer question one, I used interviews and printed and social media and discovered that they are generally perceived as positive, in both physical displacement and cultural preservation. Project Row Houses, through its Young Mothers Residential Program, PRH CDC, and PRH Preservation arms have provided stable housing for some of the most vulnerable citizens in Houston. Through the Emancipation Economic Development Council, they have partnered with other community organizations to help drive the direction of growth in the Third Ward. Cultural loss and displacement are still of concern in the Greater Third Ward because of the changing racial and socioeconomic demographics, but PRH set an example to celebrate and preserve the history and culture of the area while reinforcing social cohesion and community. As reflected in the interviews, it has been successful at it.

The Rebuild Foundation has provided a small number of housing units through the Dorchester Art + Housing Collaborative, but their primary attribute has been to develop derelict buildings in the South Side for the arts. It is hard to say if the same buildings were torn down and something else (market rate housing, retail, etc.) put in their place would Grand Crossing retain the same character or would another building typology increase property values enough for rents to increase and cause mobility. The South Side, and Grand Crossing, have already seen a significant decrease in population due to other factors. Rebuild's main mission is to preserve the African American culture (especially of hallmark African American institutions of Chicago) and interviews reflected that message is being translated and implemented well into the community. As the Rebuild Foundation continues to evolve and have an influence on the promotion of global Black artists and design practitioners, the question will likely be if it can still focus on Chicago arts and culture practitioners. Theaster Gates' leadership with the University of Chicago through Arts + Public Life "centers people of color,"²⁷⁸ focuses on cultural preservation, and provides residencies for Black and Brown artists and creative entrepreneurs. Rebuild's St. Laurence Incubator, and Gates' philosophy of "ethical development,"²⁷⁹ is widening the scope of what can happen in not only Chicago, but other U.S. cities.

To answer the second question: What can be learned about the potential for such arts-based initiatives to benefit their local communities? The answer is complex as these generally well run and well organized projects did have some weaknesses in specific areas like communication. One of their strengths is ownership. If land or property is not owned on a large scale, these organizations can create a ripple, but not enough to resist the larger market real estate forces. Of course, this is true for any kind of community development organization, but what is interesting is these arts-based projects leveraged property to make a difference in communities. An example would be Mark Bradford's significant ownership of

²⁷⁸ <https://artsandpubliclife.org/>

²⁷⁹ *ibid*

property in Leimert Park. He has some agency (as well as the other merchants who have purchased property) into what Leimert Park Village becomes. Still, by being in a location that is adjacent to new mass transit, construction of a new tourist attraction (Destination Crenshaw), and a residential area that is experiencing some gentrification and a change in racial demographics, there is no evidence that Art + Practice has encouraged new kinds of development, since it was already happening rapidly in the area. Project Row Houses because of its maturity as an arts-based community facing organization has a significant perceived effect on the Third Ward, and the city of Houston. It is considered a tourist destination.²⁸⁰

Another takeaway is that, at least with many in a community, social cohesion is possible if an organization creates programming geared toward bonding, wellness, arts, and creativity. Social cohesion can be created in various places, but arts organizations can be uniquely suited to trigger those dynamics.

GENERAL OBSERVATIONS FOR ALL THREE ORGANIZATIONS

These projects could develop and thrive in all three communities because the artists were residents of these districts. Most had some degree of buy-in from the community, especially in the case of Project Row Houses. Theaster Gates started relatively slowly and incorporated his neighbors in his initial programming. Leimert Park was already an arts-based community, so it was not a huge leap to accommodate an organization like Art + Practice. Even if there was some tension on how some of the organizations should operate, a resident artist is the best person to facilitate this level of development.

²⁸⁰ Visit Houston. "Project Row Houses | Things to Do in Houston, TX," n.d. <https://www.visithoustontexas.com/listings/project-row-houses/21031/>.

Three things are needed to make these projects happen: cheap land or property that could be adapted for reuse, significant financial reserves or help from at least one institution, and a visible and charismatic leader who has strong political and social connections. It is unlikely these models will work with smaller, unknown artists. The main exception to this was Project Row Houses which was started when real estate was inexpensive which made it easier to commence the project without large financial resources. However, typically it takes lots of finance and connections to make moves and accomplish things on a neighborhood level. To move the needle, you need to be connected to a lot of funders and community members. Visibility is a factor. Even if they receive grants and money from larger foundations, lesser-known artists might not get the substantial financial backing they need to survive. During interviews with the organizations, they had staff of various sizes from 6 people to over 20, and they still expressed facing some operational challenges or have had to pivot and utilize external help. An artist's notoriety may facilitate increased funding, a stronger and wider network, and more people willing to support your ideas.

COMMUNITY BUILDING DYNAMICS

These organizations must partner with larger institutions, although they need to balance institutional priorities, community needs, and their own goals. My own observation is that the larger institutions provided fairly flexible support for these organizations. Museums, universities, philanthropic organizations, and Fortune 500 companies have the financial reserves to (at least partially) help keep these arts-based developments afloat. They can offer much needed operational support, programming partnerships, publicity, and perceived endorsement to other entities who could give assistance. Private donations would not be enough to maintain the organizations by themselves. These partnerships benefit and hurt the perception of these art and socially engaged organizations.

Partnerships with any larger well-funded organization or university will bring skepticism from members of the community. There may be criticisms that larger organizations will exert

control or use smaller entities that they help as pawns to infiltrate neighborhoods, but these organizations probably wouldn't be able to operate without large scale external help. There may not be the same manner of criticism for Project Row Houses during the time of this research as there was for Rebuild and Art+Practice, because Project Row Houses has had thirty years to build relationships with their community. Rebuild and Art + Practice, by comparison, are much younger and still susceptible to scrutiny, even if many of their efforts are considered admirable or positive by residents. What they demonstrate is trust takes time and they should expect resistance. Because of the history of many Black neighborhoods being displaced, decimated, or bifurcated because of urban renewal and various planning efforts,²⁸¹ those in under resourced areas are always expecting the other shoe to drop. Especially when there are infrastructure improvements, an increased cost of housing, or people notice a new demographic (visiting or moving in) that historically has stayed away from the area.

At the same time, when these organizations partner with larger institutions, these partnerships may end up benefiting the same neighbors that are suspicious because these arts organizations have the finance or the assistance to reach more people. It is always a tug of war/tension with staying small and only partnering with a few specific organizations, and therefore your reach and help may be limited, or partnering with large and famous philanthropic entities and have a further reach and more people be supported. Each organization will have its supporters and detractors.

When there are high profile artists present, as part of the programming of these venues, there seems to be tension between whom they attract as visitors and the residents of the neighborhood. As discussed in this research, in some cases, the equations translate high-profile artists/guests equal to what is perceived as elite crowds to receive them, and

²⁸¹ Social Psychiatrist Dr. Mindy Thompson Fullilove calls this phenomenon "root-shock". The trauma of displacement due to decades of urban renewal. Fullilove MT. *Root Shock: How Tearing Up City Neighborhoods Hurts America and What We Can Do About It*, Ballantine Books, New York, 2004.

sometimes there is a feeling that the neighborhood residents are being left out of things. Programs and opportunities that are offered to or directed at people from outside of the community bring negative reactions. This is very human. If an organization brings in artists from outside of the community and supports them, then community members start to feel like “What are you doing for us?”. There has been criticism for both Art+Practice and of Theaster Gates with his Black Artists Retreat.

As these organizations grow and entrench themselves deeper into their communities, so do greater expectations from the community. There is the expectation to influence policy, fight against larger organizations moving into the area, or mitigate displacement and gentrification. There have been various cases documented where ANY change in the neighborhood is met with derision from residents, or residents don’t feel that changes are for them and will bring on displacement. Is it fair to judge these organizations against a rubric that lies outside of what they were founded on (Figure 75)? Is there too much assumption that these art organizations will help fix all the larger issues in neighborhoods? What can they realistically do? We should revisit the mission statements of PRH, Rebuild, and A+P.

| | Project Row Houses | Rebuild Foundation | Art + Practice |
|--------------------------|--|--|---|
| Est. | 1993 | 2008 | 2013 |
| Mission Statement | | | |
| | “We empower people and enrich communities through engagement, art, and direct action.” | “Demonstrate the impact of innovative, ambitious and entrepreneurial cultural initiatives and is enriched by three core values: Black people matter, Black spaces matter, and Black objects matter.” | “Supports the local needs of transition-age foster youth, children experiencing displacement worldwide...also provides free access to museum-curated contemporary art.” |

Figure 75 Organization Mission Statements

From my observations all three organizations are staying faithful to their missions, but one challenge that exists is because these artists have a significant platform and network of influential connections, they are often expected to do and be more. With that being said, because they are social practice institutions rooted in community there also must be a constant dialogue with those they serve.

Although these projects may not have resulted in drastic improvements in health, they have provided opportunities for many residents in their neighborhoods to obtain health services. They have also provided access to supplementary benefits that can be determinants of health, like free fresh food, blood drives, health screenings, yoga and other forms of exercise, financial planning, and credit counseling. Engagement, feelings of community, and social bonding may help with mental health and general satisfaction.

OBSTACLES IN PROPOSING METRICS OF EFFICACY FOR ARTS-BASED SOCIAL PRACTICE ORGANIZATION

During this research, I understood why measuring the impact of these organizations is essential but incredibly challenging. In many cases, the institutions are still looking for ways to track the full effects of their efforts. Even the artists occasionally question the actual value of what they have done.²⁸²

In chapter three, I discussed Markusen and Gadwa's assertion that there is a challenge in creating metrics of success or impact in creative placemaking, and I concur with their findings. First, I do not believe any organization's reach can truly be understood until a minimum of five years after establishment. While quantitative data can easily be collected

²⁸² Rick Lowe in a conversation with Folasade Ologundudu for ArtNet News was asked a question about the goals of the social practice movement and he responded "With social practice, I've given so much, and I've tried to do everything. Sometimes I ask myself, is anything really happening here?" Ologundudu, Folasade. 'That Just Shattered Things for Me': Rick Lowe on the Moment He Realized His Art Had to Escape the Studio to Have Real-World Impact. September 19, 2022. <https://news.artnet.com/art-world/rick-low-interview-social-practice-2177583>

around the number of visitors interacting with the organization in its first few years, it cannot measure lasting impressions/effects. Also, we must be cognizant of how an organization fulfills its mission, which may be in flux during that time, so an adequate adjustment period must be given.

The most appropriate way to assess an organization's influence is to evaluate it against its stated mission, then ask pointed initial questions like what population is served? With what frequency? How are programs created? Are programs developed in concert with the community or by other means? These may seem like basic ideas, but doing so allows one to filter through unrealistic expectations and create a rubric directly tied to what the institution can control. It is also essential to evaluate how the organization communicates those values to the community at large. I have learned from studying these three arts-based organizations that active and frequent communication is critical.

Measuring social impact and quality of life improvement requires qualitative data from interviews and surveys taken with many participants. If that process is to be undertaken, the first would be to determine what number of people (N) would equal a representative sample, who would be included, and how they would be reached. Residents of the organization's location would be included, and who are the key stakeholders? Identifying key stakeholders like neighborhood businesses and community leaders would offer more comprehensive perspectives. Interviewing key partners (not necessarily donors) would round out the voices that must be considered.

Simply asking the question of participants: Do you see value in interacting with this organization? This question may be complicated to understand because the community may ask for programming but not utilize it. I was told about this by staff at PRH. Attendance rates with programming could be another metric and should be recorded, but it still only tells part

of the story. Much of the information gleaned from surveys and interviews will be anecdotal. Interviewees will find value in ways that are not predictable.

The challenge of tracking success is that it will look different for every organization, even if they are comparable in size. Still, I understand a concern would be that relying too heavily on qualitative data could lead to subjective interpretations and bias in evaluating an organization's success. Quantitative data like attendance rates, numbers of people who utilize or visit the organization regularly, and specific improvements in outcomes from programs can still offer valuable insights into an organization's impact, even if it cannot capture all effects.

Although I have not seen it occur with these organizations, there is a potential for funders to analyze qualitative data. There is a danger and fundamental contradiction in tying metrics to funding. If a donor requires a non-profit arts organization to hit certain milestones or base points, some of the organization's mission and opportunities for innovation can be lost.

The success of an organization is determined by how well it adheres to its mission, its ability to effectively communicate that mission, and how much its programming is appreciated by its community. By developing metrics around these principles, an evaluation of impact can be achieved, which can serve as a valuable tool for other artist-developers who wish to emulate what is perceived as positive results detailed in this dissertation.

THE ARTIST-DEVELOPER

The artists in this case study tended to think about community and cultural preservation first. As the reader will recognize, these artists have demonstrated a dedication to building the neighborhoods they reside or were raised in instead of relocating to areas considered more affluent, the art of “staying” as discussed in Chapter 2 (Kuoni and Haines, 2015, 217).

Rick Lowe discussed creating housing that is concerned with community not profit (Kimmelman, 2006). Theaster Gates says in a conversation with Maura Guyote from Creative Capital, “Like I could live in other places...but the impact that I could have on Dorchester is so much more substantial...I can help my whole block get fences by the end of the year...For the cost of one year’s condominium fees, anything might happen”. (Kuoni and Hanes, 2015, 217). Table 9 gives a recap of each artist’s thoughts on community development.

Like other non-profit community development organizations, an artist-developer is not driven by profits and traditional return on investment, although they are not profit averse and can’t lose money on their endeavors. The artist-developer is not necessarily driven by market forces in their consideration of what to build, meaning they don’t develop artists’ lofts to sell at market rate. Instead, when housing is produced affordability and community are the primary, if not sole drivers, since as artists they are familiar with the need to have affordable places to live.

“From a developer’s standpoint, the houses we’ve built are not cost-effective. But to me they’re not just housing. They tell a story about a community”^a
Rick Lowe

“I might invest in these places because it feels like I’m supposed to. Regardless of the financial investment, I might just blow ahead, which is, in a sense, a certain kind of resource that I have that would not be available to a traditional developer. An unbelievable resource as a result of my unbelievable belief!”^b
Theaster Gates

“I thought that I would like to have a conversation with the community about contemporary ideas and social services and social justice...Give us a couple of years to see how it plays out, how we impact the community, and how the community impacts us. It’s going to take some years to find out.”^c
Mark Bradford

a. from “Life and art meet at a Houston housing project.”(Kimmelman, 2006).
 b. from The Vera List Center Field Guild on Art and Social Justice No. 1, (Kuoni and Haines 2015.201)
 c. Discussing Art + Practice-from Scorched Earth : Mark Bradford (Butler 2015. 178)

Table 9 Artists' quotes about community development.

However, art has a unique way of bringing people together; creating art creates vulnerability and bonding, creating a sense of community and preserving the cultural heritage of a place. When practiced by renowned artists with access to sizeable financial capital, art-based social organizations have the power to stabilize neighborhoods, promote social cohesion, and contribute to the vitality of each community. These organizations and resident artists are able to address the needs of the community in a way that traditional real estate developers cannot. With artists at the helm, these organizations offer a unique perspective and a fresh approach to community development that not only enhances the physical environment but also fosters a sense of belonging and pride among residents through cultural preservation and social activities. Of course, conflicting feelings exist. As stated earlier I interviewed stakeholders and community actors and could not obtain a full neighborhood survey. Different research methods and further research could understand a wider scope of opinions.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Part of why this project was essential to me as an architect-artist, and hopefully one day immersing myself in real estate, is rooted in the permanence of African American spaces and storytelling. When I began my doctoral journey, I investigated the concept of the artist, urban policy, and their relationship to gentrification. I personally experienced the trauma of being displaced and having familial history erased or having to relocate due to a larger gentrifying institution and I wanted to understand how artists and non-traditional workers could exist, and thrive, in cities. This investigation pivoted from the artist being passive and reactive to a more active, willful, and in some ways nonconformist patterns of artists in the city. David Adjaye, in conversation with Rick Lowe and curator Thelma Golden (at the Gagosian Gallery, in the same exhibition *Social Works*, that was introduced in the first chapter) stated it succinctly:

“Cataloging or Mapping space is so fundamental to the Black experience, because in a sense colonization was about erasure of the space. Because when you erase the history of the space, you erase the sense of continuity of the community and the earth. In my work we are continually searching for spaces that are not necessarily even built by the Black community but inhabited and hybridized as spaces of ownership that

become part of the hybridized catalog of the body of knowledge the spatial Black experience.”²⁸³

Through my research, I've come to agree with Theaster Gates' conclusions in *The Just City Essays: 26 Visions for Urban Equity, Inclusion, and Opportunity*, “The sculptor and the policy expert and the planner together make great cities” (Griffin, et al., 2015).

It has been an honor, at times an excruciating, intimidating, but beautiful experience to look at these artists and organizations and to interview all the generous people who have shared with me. Thank you for your time, perspectives, and vulnerability.

²⁸³ Gagosian Quarterly. “In Conversation: David Adjaye, Rick Lowe, and Thelma Golden | Video,” September 29, 2021. <https://gagosian.com/quarterly/2021/09/29/video-in-conversation-david-adjaye-rick-lowe-thelma-golden/>

Appendix

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GENERAL WARRANTY DEED WITH VENDOR'S LIEN

STEWART TITLE HOUSTON DIVISION

THE STATE OF TEXAS §
§
COUNTY OF HARRIS §

500-31-1956 \$800

07/26/94 00183635 P977177 § 8.

LUKE CASH, hereinafter called "Grantor", for and in consideration of the sum of TEN AND NO/100 DOLLARS (\$10.00), together with other and good and valuable consideration to Grantor cash in hand paid by PROJECT ROW HOUSES, INC., a Texas not-for-profit corporation, hereinafter called "Grantees", whose address is c/o Charles L. Drayden, Attorney, 1360 Post Oak Boulevard, Suite 1650, Houston, Texas 77056-3014, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged, and the further consideration of ONE HUNDRED TWENTY TWO THOUSAND AND NO 100 DOLLARS (\$122,000.00) paid in hand by HEIMBINDER FAMILY FOUNDATION, hereinafter called BENEFICIARY TO GRANTOR, at the special instance and request of the GRANTEE herein, the receipt of which is hereby acknowledged and confessed, and as evidence of such advancement, GRANTEE has executed a Promissory Note of even date herewith, for the amount payable to the order of BENEFICIARY, being due and payable and bearing interest as therein provided, and finally maturing on February 1, 1996; which Note is secured by the Vendor's Lien herein reserved and is additionally secured by a Deed of Trust dated of even date herewith, executed by the GRANTEE herein to STEVEN E. LANE, Trustee, reference to which is here made for all purposes; and in consideration of the payment of the sum above mentioned by the Beneficiary above mentioned, GRANTOR hereby transfers, sets over, assigns, and conveys unto said Beneficiary and assigns, the Vendor's Lien and Superior Title herein retained and reserved against the property and Premises herein conveyed, in the same manner and to the same extent as if said note had been executed in Grantor's favor and by said Grantor assigned to the Beneficiary without recourse; has GRANTED, SOLD, and CONVEYED and by these presents do GRANT, SELL, and CONVEY unto the said GRANTEE all that certain real property described as follows, to wit:

Lots Five through Ten (5-10) and West One-Half (1/2) of lot Eleven (11), of HOLMAN OUTLOT NO. 34, an addition in Harris County, Texas, according to the Map or Plat thereof recorded in Volume 174, Page 241, of the Deed Records of Harris County, Texas.

This conveyance is made subject to the following matters, but only to the extent same are in effect at this time and only to the extent that they relate to the hereinabove described property, to wit: restrictions, covenants, easements and outstanding mineral reservations, rights and royalties, if any, shown of record in the hereinabove mentioned county and state, and to all zoning laws, regulations and ordinances of municipal and/or governmental authorities, if any. Taxes for the current year have been prorated and are assumed by the Grantees.

TO HAVE AND TO HOLD the above described premises, together with all and singular the rights and appurtenances thereto in anywise belonging unto the said Grantees, their heirs and assigns forever, and Grantor does hereby bind himself, his heirs, executors, administrators and assigns, to WARRANT AND FOREVER DEFEND, all and singular, the said premises unto the said Grantees, their heirs and assigns, against every person whomsoever lawfully claiming or to claim the same or any part thereof.

But it is expressly agreed and stipulated that the Vendor's Lien as well as the superior title in and to the above described premises is retained against the above described property, premises and improvements until the above described note and all interest thereon are fully paid according to the face, tenor, effect and reading thereof, when this Deed shall become absolute.

Grantor has made and hereby makes no warranties as to the condition or state of repair of the subject property. Grantor conveys and Grantees accept same in its present condition, "as is", without any warranties of condition or habitability.

EXECUTED this 22 day of July, 19 94 500-31-1957,

LUKE CASH
LUKE CASH

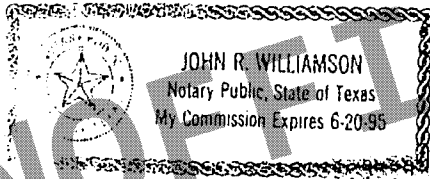
ACCEPTED BY GRANTEE:

PROJECT ROW HOUSES, INC., a Texas
not-for-profit corporation

By: _____
Name: Charles L. Drayden
Title: President, Board of Directors

THE STATE OF TEXAS §
 §
COUNTY OF HARRIS §

This instrument was acknowledged before me on this the 22 day of
July, 1994, by LUKE CASH.



John R. Williamson
Notary Public in and for the
State of Texas

(Printed Name)

My commission expires:

RETURN AFTER RECORDING TO:

PROJECT ROW HOUSES, INC.
c/o Charles L. Drayden
1360 Post Oak Blvd., Suite 1650
Houston, Texas 77056-3014

PREPARED IN THE LAW OFFICE OF:

George N. Wyche, Jr.
DRAYDEN, WYCHE & WOOD, L.L.P.
1360 Post Oak Blvd., Suite 1650
Houston, Texas 77056-3014

500-31-1958

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ANY PROVISION HEREIN WHICH RESTRICTS THE SALE, RENTAL, OR USE OF THE DESCRIBED REAL PROPERTY BECAUSE OF COLOR OR RACE IS INVALID AND UNENFORCEABLE UNDER FEDERAL LAW
THE STATE OF TEXAS }
COUNTY OF HARRIS }

I hereby certify that this instrument was FILED in File Number Sequence on the date and at the time stamped hereon by me; and was duly RECORDED, in the Official Public Records of Real Property of Harris County, Texas on

JUL 26 1994



Beverly B. Layman

COUNTY CLERK
HARRIS COUNTY, TEXAS

FILED
94 JUL 26 PM 2:30
COUNTY CLERK
HARRIS COUNTY TEXAS

1002



NPS Form 10-900
1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Stony Island Trust & Savings Bank Building
Other names/site number: Stony Island State Savings Bank Building
Name of related multiple property listing:

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

2. Location

Street & number: 6760 South Stony Island Avenue
City or town: Chicago State: IL County: Cook
Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets
the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic
Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.
In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I
recommend that this property be considered significant at the following
level(s) of significance:

national statewide local
Applicable National Register Criteria:
 A B C D

[Signature] DSHPO, 11-7-2013
Signature of certifying official/Title: Date
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

Stony Island Trust & Savings Bank Building
Name of Property

Cook County, IL
County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title : _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register
- determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

Van Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

12.31.13
Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site

Stony Island Trust & Savings Bank Building
Name of Property

Cook County, IL
County and State

Structure

Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

| Contributing | Noncontributing | |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| <u>1</u> | _____ | buildings |
| _____ | _____ | sites |
| _____ | _____ | structures |
| _____ | _____ | objects |
| <u>1</u> | _____ | Total |

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE

FINANCIAL

INSTITUTION

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT /

NOT IN USE

Stony Island Trust & Savings Bank Building
Name of Property

Cook County, IL
County and State

Director of Communications quote regarding the evolution of the Rebuild Foundation:

“In terms of the core audience for who the mission serves, that has expanded from our humble beginnings in 2010 when Theaster launched Rebuild Foundation the primary community that we were serving was Black artists in the community but also Black artists connected to Theaster. So we started hosting Black Cinema House through his own home, those were folks that were directly connected to him or by three degrees of separation, friends would say “Oh I know this person who would really benefit from this program. Can we invite them?” so it was really grassroots when it started, very small, almost within a circle of friends. Scholars and artists and filmmakers, etc. That expand when he purchased the Dorchester properties and started engaging more folks around the work, then he started hosting Black Artist Retreat in Chicago at the sites so that expanded beyond artists in Chicago, reaching into artists in L.A., reaching into artists in New York, inviting them to participate in this convening, in this exchange of ideas and these difficult questions of the state of the art world especially as it relates to Black and Brown artists, and presentations on the work so it grew from a smaller circle of friends to a larger circle of artists and friends and then as Theaster purchased the Stony Island Arts Bank in 2015 then it really became being about the greater Grand Crossing community. That was our primary audience, our primary community. Our neighbors. In addition to artists who lived in Chicago primarily on the South and West sides. We really were intentional and made a concerted effort about our programs and our spaces meeting the immediate needs of the folks that lived right outside our door, who lived on the block, and who were curious about what we were doing with Rebuild...Why we would take over this abandoned bank? What will it do for the community? So they became our primary audience, but as the sites grew and the spaces grew, as Theater’s work grew and news of his work grew, the ambitions grew, the vision grew, and the programs reach grew. So at this point in our evolution we still consider Greater Grand Crossing to be our community, but our community will grow. However we are at a point where our community is a more global cohort of artists, a more global community of creatives both one beyond Artists with a capital “A” to include creative entrepreneurs, designers, but also geographically we now have artist in residence with us as far as Ghana, as far as the UK and in New York, L.A., in Miami. So, it’s just grown in scale, grown in reach, and grown in what we are able to do for artists as well as our impact.”²⁸⁴

²⁸⁴ From interview December 7, 2022.

Consent to Take Part in a Human Research Study -- Art Spaces -- Interviews

You are being asked to take part in a research study by Aisha Densmore-Bey.

This research is being conducted to learn about the impact of arts related neighborhood development in predominantly African-American communities. Specifically, the study is interested in learning about the development/operational practices and perceived social, physical, and cultural impacts on community. Specifically we will be discussing (insert specific arts + cultural space here).

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you may withdraw or end your participation at any time for any reason. Your participation can be anonymous or identified. You retain the option of reviewing your information provided to the researcher and giving a signature of consent.

If you take part in this study, you will be asked to complete an interview over the course of 30 to 45 minutes via telephone, Zoom, or in-person.

If you have any questions about this study, you can contact Aisha Densmore-Bey (phone: 857-225-5107, email: aishadensmorebey@gsd.harvard.edu).

Thank you for your time and participation.



HARVARD

Human Research Protection Program

Harvard University-Area
Committee on the Use of Human Subjects
44-R Brattle, Suite 200 (2nd floor)
Cambridge, MA 02138
IRB Registration - IRB00000109
Federal Wide Assurance - FWA00004837

Notification of Initial Study Exemption Determination

December 10, 2021

Aisha Densmore-Bey
aishadensmorebey@gsd.harvard.edu

Protocol Title: The Artist-Developer: A case study of impact through art-centered development in African-American neighborhoods.
Principal Investigator: Aisha Densmore-Bey
Protocol #: IRB21-1378
Funding Source: Joint Center for Housing Studies [GSD]; Harvard Mellon Urban Initiative
IRB Review Date: 12/10/2021
IRB Effective Date: 12/10/2021
IRB Review Action: Exempt

This Initial Study submission meets the criteria for exemption per the regulations found at 45 CFR 46.104(d) (2). As such, additional IRB review is not required.

The Principal Investigator is responsible for ensuring compliance with any applicable local government or institutional laws, legislation, regulations, and/or policies, whether conducting research internationally or nationally. Additionally, if local IRB/ethics review is required, it must be obtained before any human subjects research activities are conducted in the field. If assistance with applicable local requirements is needed, please contact the Harvard University-Area IRB office.

The documents that were finalized for this submission may be accessed through the IRB electronic submission management system at the following link: [IRB21-1378](#)

The determination that your research is exempt does not expire, and you will not file annual renewals. If changes to the research are proposed that would alter the IRB's original exemption determination, they should be submitted in ESTR by using the Modify Study button. If unsure, contact the Harvard University-Area IRB office.

The IRB made the following determinations:

- Research Information Security Level (based on Harvard Research Data Security Policy): Non-Sensitive



HARVARD

Human Research Protection Program

Please contact me at 617-496-5593 or elizabeth_parsons@harvard.edu with any questions.

Sincerely,

Elizabeth Parsons
IRB Administrator

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