

# ARTISTS COUNT

IN ST. LOUIS

REGIONAL ARTS COMMISSION

## FULL REPORT

Artists Count is an initiative of the Regional Arts Commission of St. Louis



REGIONAL ARTS  
COMMISSION  
OF ST. LOUIS

Special thanks to The Kresge Foundation for  
generously supporting the Artists Count survey.

THE KRESGE FOUNDATION

**March 2013**

# A Survey Of Artists In The St. Louis Region

Prepared By

Center for the Study of Art & Community

October 2012

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## Part One: *Introduction*

**I**n the winter of 2011 the Center for the Study of Art & Community was asked by the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission (RAC) to help them in their efforts to learn more about the structure and dynamics of the artist ecosystems in the St. Louis City and County. As a part of this initiative funded by the Kresge Foundation, RAC, the Center, and artists and community advisors jointly developed a seven-part survey designed to give artists an opportunity to reflect on and share the environment, conditions, and motivations that affect their work. This research initiative, dubbed Artists Count, coincided with the completion of the Commission's 2012 Strategic Plan, which identified support for artists as a major priority.

The research design was informed by two core assumptions related to community cultural development. The first, the concept of the “cultural ecosystem,” views artists, arts organizations, audiences, funders, etc., as parts of a system whose interdependent mechanisms are best understood when considered as a whole. Our second foundational premise is that cultural ecosystems are highly dependent on the physical, economic, and creative health of the artists working within them.

**Survey Process:** The survey was conducted from April through August of 2012. The invitation to participate was disseminated widely via electronic, print media and hands on distribution to solicit the participation of “anybody who considers himself or herself an artist” living in the St. Louis region. Over 3,000 artists responded.

The survey focused on areas (or Sections) that have been identified as key components of artist support systems, which include:

1. The Artists
2. Artistic Disciplines and Livelihoods
3. Living and Working as an Artist
4. Career Support
5. Sharing Artistic Work
6. The Place of Artists in the Community
7. Reflections on the Artist's Life
8. The Artist Ecosystem in the St. Louis Region

**Response:** The invitation to participate made it clear that the survey was being conducted anonymously, and would be vetted by a third party, the Center (CSA&C). The study employed both online and print surveys in two versions—an extensive 49-question form and a shorter 17-question version designed to capture key information from artists who were less inclined to the time required for the full set of questions.

In all, 2,385 artists completed the full survey and 652 artists submitted the shorter form. For surveys of this length calling for both quantitative and narrative responses, this is a very high level of participation. The findings for the questions that were common to both surveys were virtually identical. Given this, unless otherwise noted, the data cited in this report is from the full survey. Also, because some respondents skipped some questions, all quantitative findings are based on responses for individual questions. In addition to numerical data, the survey also solicited written answers and comments for a number of questions. Given the length and detail of these narrative responses, it is clear that the majority of respondents put considerable time and thought into their answers. Many comments we received are very heartfelt and revealing.

**The Report:** This report shares **the findings** for each of the seven study areas in **Part Two**. **Part Three** provides **recommendations and observations** on the data, and **Part Four** the report's appendixes.

# Part Two:

## *Findings*

### 1. The Artists

**1.1 The study cohort:** The demographic distribution of the Artists Count research cohort provides an interesting portrait of the community of artists living and working in the St. Louis region. Key indicators include the following:

- *Racial/Ethnic Composition:* 81.4% of those sharing racial/ethnic data were Caucasian. This compares to 76.9% for the general population in the St. Louis Metropolitan Statistical Area<sup>1</sup>. The two next largest ethnic/racial groupings were African American (7.7%) and Multicultural (5.9%). *Table 1* on the next page shows the racial and ethnic distribution of survey respondents and for the general population in the city, county, and bi-state region.
- *Language:* Consistent with the ethnic composition of the group, the very large majority of the respondents (97%) report English as their first language. Half of those identifying as Hispanic/Latino or Asian identified a first language other than English.
- *Gender and Age:* The gender distribution of the study cohort follows the pattern seen in other artist research, with 60.7% of the respondent female and 39.3% male. Age wise, survey respondents ranged in age from 14 to 87, but median age was 42 years old. This is four years older than the median age for the county's general population, which is 38. The age distribution of the cohort is fairly evenly spread across the adult population. The largest single groups, those aged 25 to 34 and 55 plus, represented 25% of the respondents, while the 35-45 and 45-55 groups each comprised 20% of the total.
- *Place of Residence:* Of the total cohort, 40.3% of the respondents resided in areas of the St. Louis County outside the city proper and 33.6% were from St. Louis City. Of the rest, 18% were from Missouri counties surrounding the St. Louis region and 8% were from nearby towns in Illinois.

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<sup>1</sup> "American Community Survey 2011" U.S. Census Bureau as reflected in: <http://www.stlrcga.org/x1832.xml>

- **Neighborhoods:** The distribution of artists taking part in the survey was concentrated in a fairly small number of the St. Louis region's 57 zip codes. Only five zip codes comprised 33% of the total responding from the survey and the top 10 participating zip codes produced 53% of all the survey's participants (of these, seven were located within St. Louis City). See also *finding 3.4* and *Recommendation 4.1*

**Table 1: Racial and Ethnic Background of Survey Respondents\***

	Artist Count (%)	St. Louis Co. (%) <sup>2</sup>	St. Louis City (%)	Greater St. Louis (bi-state) (%)
<b>Multicultural/mixed ancestry</b>	<b>5.9</b>	<b>1.8</b>	<b>2.4</b>	<b>1.8</b>
<b>American Indian/Alaska Native</b>	<b>0.4</b>	<b>.02</b>	<b>.03</b>	<b>1.1</b>
<b>Asian American/Pacific Islander</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>3.6</b>	<b>2.9</b>	<b>2.1</b>
<b>African</b>	<b>0.2</b>			
<b>African American</b>	<b>7.7</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>49.2</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>Caucasian</b>	<b>81.4</b>	<b>71</b>	<b>43.9</b>	<b>76.9</b>
<b>Hispanic/Latino</b>	<b>1.6</b>	<b>2.6</b>	<b>3.5</b>	<b>2.5</b>
<b>Other Race/Ethnic Group</b>	<b>1.2</b>			

\*2,320 of the respondents answered this question; 63 did not

## 1.2 Some areas of the city and county have particularly high concentrations of artists.

A cultural cluster is an area with high concentrations of artists and arts organizations as a percentage of total population<sup>3</sup>. Research by the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) shows that these kinds of high-density cultural assets can be a powerful stimulant for community development. For the 57 zip codes in the St. Louis region, the average Artists Count response rate as a percentage of population was .0033%. In looking at the distribution of all the region's responses, four areas with response rates above .0040% are worthy of note. These zip code areas with a particularly high concentration of artists include:

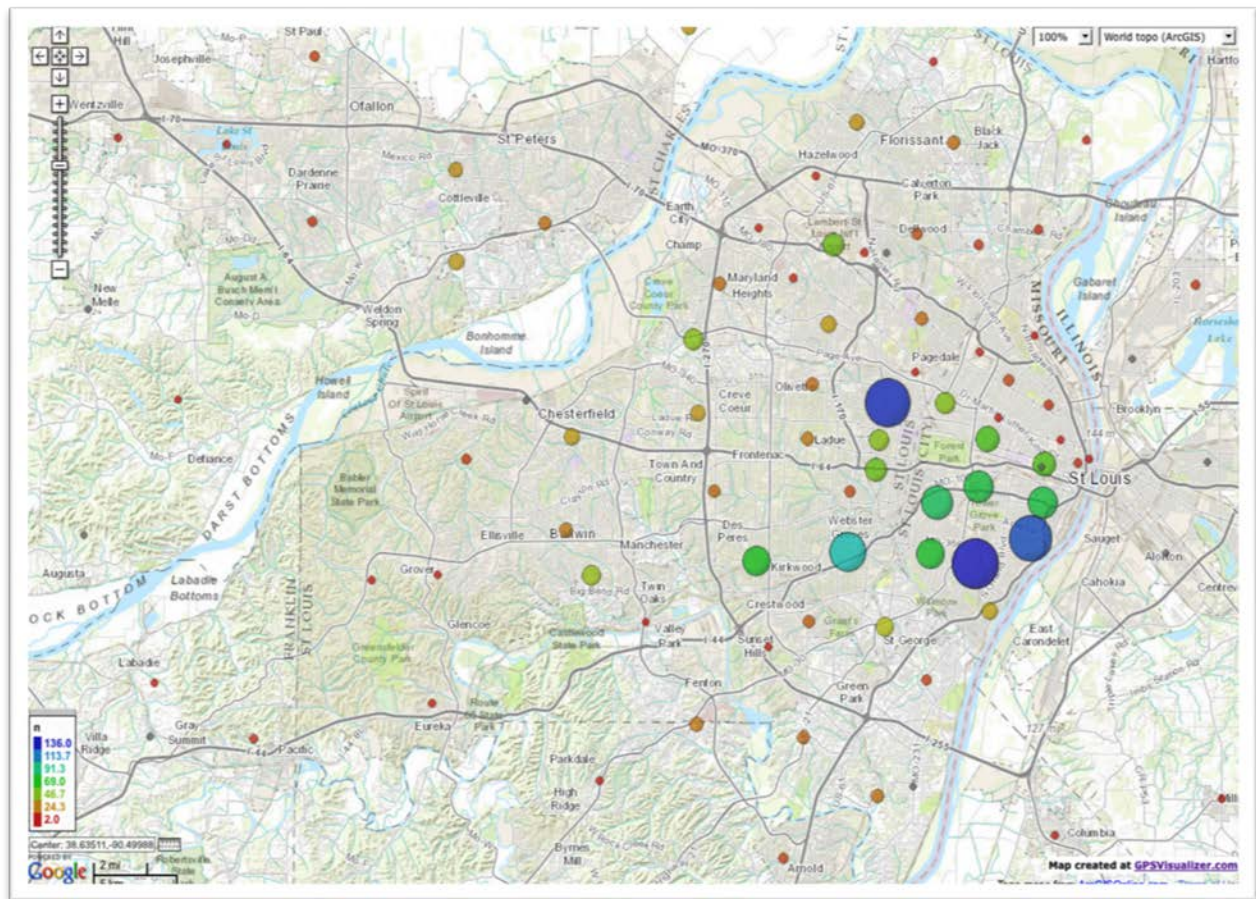
1. **63103:** The centrally located city area bordered by Delmar Ave. on the north, Park Ave on the south, North Grand Blvd. to the west, and I-70 to the east. That includes parts of Downtown and Midtown. The response rate for this zip code was nearly four times the average for the entire cohort.
2. **63117:** The city of Richmond Heights.
3. **63143:** The Maplewood area bordered by I-64 to the north, Marshall Ave. to the south, South Hanley Rd. on the west, and I-44 to the east.
4. **63118:** The area bisected by Cherokee Street and bordered by Russell Blvd. to the north, Meramec St. on the south, South Grand Ave. to the west, and the Mississippi River to the east. This includes Tower Grove East, Benton Park and Cherokee neighborhoods.

2. 2010 USA Census: <http://quickfacts.census.gov/qfd/states/29/29189.html>

3. See Appendix C. "Cultivating Natural Cultural Districts," Susan Seifert and Mark Stern, from the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP).

Another way of looking at concentrations of artistic activity is to consider larger, contiguous areas with large numbers of artists responding to the survey. In the city of St. Louis, the eight zip codes<sup>4</sup> comprising most of the southern half of the city produced 33% of the total survey responses and 79% of all of the city's responses. Outside of the city, the two contiguous areas represented by zip codes 63119 (Webster Groves) and 63122 (Kirkwood) are home to 12.5% of the surveyed artists. Locally dense artist communities like these can be a powerful asset for community development in the St. Louis region. They present the Commission with opportunities for focusing its programming and resources in ways that can make a significant impact.

**Figure 1: The Geographic Distribution of Artists Count Respondents<sup>5</sup>**



4. The eight contiguous zip codes comprising this area are 63103, 63104, 63108, 63109, 63110, 63118, and 63139.

<sup>5</sup> An interactive version of this map is available at: [https://www.dropbox.com/s/ka80dio4caqn036/RAC\\_RES\\_ArtistXzip\\_all.html](https://www.dropbox.com/s/ka80dio4caqn036/RAC_RES_ArtistXzip_all.html)



## 2. Artistic Disciplines and Livelihoods

**2.1 Arts disciplines:** Our survey asked artists to first identify all arts disciplines they work in and then indicate their “primary discipline.” The distribution of primary disciplines was fairly uneven with the majority coming from the visual (40%) and performing arts (27%). Architecture/design (8.2%), media (5.7%), and the literary arts (5.2%) had the next highest rates of response. Almost every artist responding indicated that they worked in more than one discipline. The disciplines that were identified most often as “secondary” were media, design, and community arts. This is not surprising since these disciplines tend to be multidisciplinary in nature. The breakdown among all discipline categories in the survey is represented in *Table 2* below.

**Table 2: Arts Disciplines Reported by Survey Respondents**

Arts Disciplines	Multiple answer option (%)	Primary Discipline: Single answer (%)
Music	28.9	17.9
Dance	8.2	3.9
Visual Artist	57.3	40.0
Theater	14.5	6.2
Literary Arts	14.9	5.9
Media Arts	20.4	5.7
Interdisciplinary	7.3	1.8
Architecture	3.2	0.7
Design	22.5	7.5
Community Arts	14.8	2.2
Craft	3.0	2.0
Other/Interdisciplinary	7.2	4.0
No one area primary		2.3

**2.2 Full-time or part-time, artists are making a lifetime commitment:** Consistent with the age distribution, respondents’ answers to the question “How many years have you been an artist?” were quite evenly spread from beginners through seasoned artists with 40 years or more. Newcomers (0–5 years) are the minority (12%), and fully a quarter of the artists have been practicing for over 30 years. Given the median age of 42 for the entire cohort, nearly half of the artists responding have spent more than half of their lives working as artists. So, not surprisingly, being an artist appears to be a life commitment.

Across all disciplines nearly 30% of those surveyed indicated that they were full-time artists. Since respondents could check more than one option, there is some overlap in the following results:

- 29.4% are full-time artists
- 35.8% are part-time artists

- 26.7% say they are both an artist and an arts worker
- 9% are full- or part-time arts workers

As such, just over a quarter reported that they work as both an artist and an arts worker. (For the purposes of this survey, “arts worker” was defined as “teachers and those who provide support for arts enterprises, such as administrators, owners/managers of venues, technical workers, stagehands, etc.”) Despite the fact that over 70% are not making art full-time, they report spending 35% of their time making art and another 27% on arts-related work. The large majority of those responding also said that they spend less than 50% of their time promoting their work, with the largest group (37.5%) saying that they spend less than 10% of their time on these tasks.

*Nearly three quarters of the survey artists spend over 60% of their time on arts-related work.*

### 2.3 The distribution of artists’ income in the city and county is fairly consistent with that of the general population in the region.

**Table 3: Reported Artist Income Levels**

Income category	Artist Count Personal (%)	Artist Count Household (%)	St. Louis Region Household (%) <sup>6</sup>
\$10K or less	19.2	7.6	6.6
\$10–25K	27.2	15.8	14.8
\$25–50K	31.6	22.6	24.3
\$50–75K	12.3	20.5	17.4
\$75–100K	6.4	16.9	11.8
\$100–125K	1.7	8.8	7.9
\$125K+	1.6	7.8	17.2

*Personal income:* In terms of earning capacity, nearly 46% of the artists reporting indicate that they are making less than \$25K per year from all sources. In the lower middle range, 31.6% report they are earning (\$25K–\$50K) from both

artistic and non-artistic income sources. A smaller group, almost 18.7%, report earning from \$50K–\$100K individually. It is interesting to note that 45.4% of the women report personal incomes of lower than \$25K compared to 36.6% of the men. The gender difference largely disappears with household income, with males having a slight advantage (15%) in the upper two income categories compared to females (12.9%).

*73 % have household incomes over \$25K and 54% over \$50K*

*Household income:* Household income is another useful, and often more accurate, indicator of living standards. When the two lower income categories are added, 23.4% of the respondents come from

households earning less than \$25K annually. This is just above the U.S. poverty level for a family of four but it is below the median household incomes in the region with St. Louis City at \$33,652 and St. Louis County at \$55,290. In the middle of the scale, 22.6% of the artists

<sup>6</sup> Source: U.S. Census Bureau, 2011 American Community Survey

responding report having household income of \$25K–\$50K. The largest group (54 %) is composed of those with household incomes above \$50K, with nearly two-thirds of those earning above \$75K. Comparing household incomes for the Artists Count cohort and the St. Louis region, the major difference is in top category where less than half as many artists report incomes above \$125K.

Given these statistics, it is not surprising that many artists tend to locate in lower income neighborhoods. For the 10 zip code areas that produced 53% of our survey responses, the average household income is \$37K (compared to \$33,652 for the city and \$55,290 for the county.) This pattern is more pronounced for the 10 zip codes where 90% of the city-dwelling respondents live, which have an average household income of \$28,305.

**2.4 Art making does not sustain most of the area’s artists:** Respondents were asked to identify what percentage of their income came from various sources. Just under 79% reported that they do not earn their living primarily through their art. This is roughly in line with data on artists’ income sources from other studies.

**Table 4: Sources of Artist Income**

Artistic work	21%
Arts-related work	22%
Non-arts-related work	36%
Retirement income	10%
Other income	11%

In their narrative commentaries, those artists who are supporting themselves from art making expressed deep gratitude and satisfaction with their circumstances. Quite a few stated that they understood they were in a comparatively unique position. Despite their good fortune, however,

some said that their full-time focus came with a price, principally with regard to money and time. A few said that their artistic autonomy was only possible because of shared family income.

**2.5 Some disciplines appear more economically sustainable than others:** The disciplines with the highest percentage of artists working solely on their art were architects (64.3%), designers (50.3%), and theater (34.9%) and media artists (32.2%). These disciplines seemed to offer greater access to economies (e.g., commercial viability, union representation) that enabled some to sustain themselves solely through art making. Specifically:

- Designers and architects who work principally in commercial markets
- Media artists who have access to commercial markets
- Theater professionals who work regularly in equity theater

*St. Louis is a good place to produce art but not supportive in marketing and selling it.*  
—Visual Artist

This is in contrast with 15% of the writers who identified themselves as working full-time. Faring somewhat better, 29% of the visual artists and 26% of

the dancers said that their work was exclusively artistic. For the musicians responding, 23.5% reported art-only careers. Among those identifying themselves as amateurs, writers (22.7%) and, interestingly, media artists (15.7%) had the highest percentages. (See also *Appendix B: Artist's Income by Discipline*.) In their comments, a number of those earning a living through their art noted that they make a “meager” living. This is borne out in the specific data we received on income levels (see *Table 3*, on the previous page).

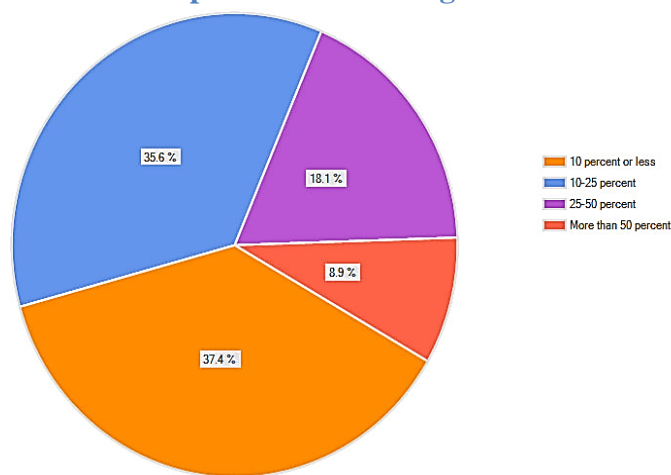
**2.6 The patchwork nature of the artist's economy:** Fully 79% of the respondents indicated that they derive income from multiple sources—art making, teaching, other employment, family support, etc. As one commented, “I’ve put together many things to make things work.” This finding echoes those of other studies<sup>7</sup> that have documented the uniquely eclectic nature of artists’ economies in other U.S. communities. The fact that the majority of these economic puzzle pieces (43%) are arts-related (i.e., art making, teaching, and arts administration) is also worthy of note.

*Our identities as artists are not important if we can't make any money doing it—it is not a compromise if we get inventive about how to sustain ourselves.*  
—Musician

This diversity of income sources also points to another theme that emerged through multiple questions in this survey. A number of artists indicated that the “stitched-together” nature of their livelihoods made both their art making and everyday lives fairly unpredictable. Understandably, this condition has been exacerbated further by the economic downturn.

Other than non-arts jobs (36%), the sources of income not derived from art making were “income from other sources” (11%) and retirement (10%). With regard to retirement, the 9% of respondents over the age of 65 is slightly lower than the age distribution in the 12% of the general population aged 65 or over.<sup>8</sup>

**Table 5: Time Spent Administering Art Career**



**2.7 Artists as administrators reflect the changing nature of the artist's ecosystem:** When artists were asked to describe how much of their time they spent working administratively in support of their art making, a little over 37% indicated 10% or less. But 54% said that they spent between 10% and 50% of their time administering their arts careers, with a particular emphasis on marketing and communication. It's a given that most artists who support

7. Seifert and Stern, *From Creative Economy to Creative Society* (SIAP, University of Pennsylvania: 2007); Rosario-Jackson, Maria et al., *Investing in Creativity: A Study of the Support Structure for U.S. Artists* (Urban Institute: 2003); “Report on Healthcare Needs of Washington State Artists” (Artist Trust, Seattle: 2008).

8. Meyer, Julie. Census 2000 Brief, C2KBR/01-12 (U.S. Census Bureau, Washington, DC: 2001).

themselves from art making must devote a portion of their time managing their careers. In their comments several artists addressed the administrative challenges of making a living from their art—that independent artists are, in fact, running small businesses that require planning, marketing, fund-raising, and the like. Among responding artists, those on the “goods” side of the commercial equation appeared to devote significant time to managing their business affairs. Most who identified as sole proprietors or small-business owners seemed to recognize that the self-contained nature of their work provides a significant level of autonomy. Others saw these activities as a necessary but somewhat onerous aspect of their artist life.

Some artists indicated that they worked in arts administration positions that were not directly connected to their own art-making activities. Most often, these artists were employed by organizations working in their own disciplines. In these instances, most were thankful that there was some alignment between their jobs and their studio work. In some cases, though, they resented the time away from the studio.

## **2.8 Teaching is a significant source of support for artists:**

Nearly 65% of the artists responding indicated that they earned a portion of their living in the past year through teaching. This is consistent with other research on artists’ livelihoods. These art-teaching jobs typically include post-secondary teaching, K–12 instruction, and work in community settings. This finding shows that there is a fairly robust market for teaching artists in both formal and informal educational settings. Although many expressed a desire for a career centered on making art alone, most described their teaching as reasonably compatible with their creative efforts. Very few indicated that they did not like teaching per se but resented having to depend on teaching to make ends meet.

*It’s a patchwork—over the past year I have raised money through Kickstarter to host a month long project, taught adjunct at two universities for a semester, received a travel grant that paid for living/exhibiting in Europe for two months, and then performed freelance work for the past six months.*

—Choreographer

**2.9 The “temporal” nature of artist employment:** Like many in the workforce, artists with outside employment are increasingly concerned about the uncertain nature of the U.S. economy. Given the fact that many artists use part-time employment as part of their support strategy, increased competitiveness in the part-time job market increases stress on the already unstable nature of the artists’ economy.

**2.10 Health care is a major factor for this cohort:** Although a substantial majority of respondents (80%) indicated that they have health insurance, 30% of those surveyed also indicated that access to health care was a significant issue for them. The payment of health care premiums are divided fairly evenly with 33.2% paying all, 30.7% paying part, and 36.1% not paying anything (*in this instance a presumption can be made that these premiums are paid by someone else*).

Given that the median age of our respondents was 42 years, it is not surprising that health issues were mentioned numerous times in comments shared by artists. A number of artists referenced the need for health care (and other public benefits such as social security, disability, and Medicare) and how a teaching position or other outside employment provided this. Some went on to suggest that these kinds of benefits were a major impetus for securing and remaining in outside jobs. This suggests that finding ways to increase access to health care (and other public benefits) continues to be an important issue for artists. Other research indicates that a majority of working artists cannot afford to pay for their own health insurance and depend on spouses or outside jobs for coverage.<sup>9</sup>

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9. Ibid, Artist Trust.



### 3. Living and Working as an Artist

*For this section, we checked the overall distributions and then looked at any correlation with discipline and/or income. With regard to discipline, we used **primary disciplines** (music, visual, theater, literary, and media) to look for correlations. For income we used **personal income** ranges (less than \$10K, \$10K–\$25K, \$50K–\$75K, and the top two combined groups that we designate as \$100K or more). The following reflects themes and patterns in overall data and those correlations that stood out.*

**3.1 Most artists have adequate space to do their work:** A significant majority of artists (71.3%) indicated that they had access to the space in which they need to work effectively. Well over a quarter (28.7%), though, said this was a concern; of these, half identified rehearsal space or a visual arts studio specifically. The latter was the most specifically identified not surprisingly given the predominance of visual artists in the sample.

*It would be great to see an arts-related co-working building to rent studio/office space for artists.*

—Photographer

**3.2 Space matters:** Among those who commented on their workspace there was agreement across all disciplines that the quality of their work is significantly influenced by the space in which it is created.

Performers were likely to focus on venue size, safety, and availability of technical elements and support, with differing requirements for rehearsal and presenting venues. (Affordability, availability, and size for the former; and audience quality and technical support for the latter.)

Visual artists described the need for studios large enough to accommodate both equipment and the storage of inventory and supplies. Writers and composers talked more about environmental qualities, emphasizing privacy and freedom from distraction. It should be noted that, like artists in other disciplines, many writers indicated that they needed a balance of private time and interaction with people. A number of artists described the stimulating effect of a workspace that “just feels right” or “supports my way of working.” This meant familiarity for some; for others, it translated as being separate, isolated, or close to nature.

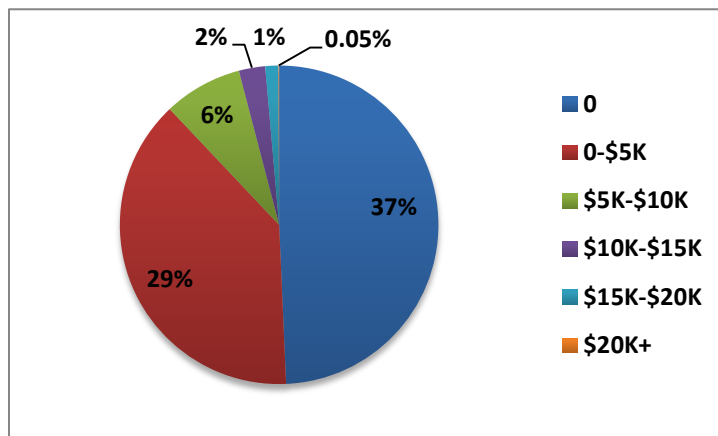
**3.3 Successful presenters have qualities that make a difference:** In addition to the physical and technical qualities described above, many artists identified their relationships with presenting/exhibiting facilities as critical to both fulfilling their creative vision and connecting to a supportive audience. The desirable qualities articulated included:

- “Getting” the work
- Knowing their audience
- Marketing savvy

- Willingness to take risks
- Commitment to the artist's career over time

Venues operating with the kind of sensibility described above will feature the work of artists (often local) that reflects local stories. This, in turn, will reflect the issues people care about. Some performing artists indicated that they felt these were the conditions that help audiences understand and support the intrinsic connection between the art they like and the artist(s) who made it.

**Table 6: Annual Cost of Artists' Work Space**



### 3.4 Artist space costs are both widely varied and hard to discern.

The largest group of respondents (37%) indicates that they pay nothing for their space. From their comments and other survey responses, we believe that there are some in this group who are currently without space. We also deduce that there is another sub group that perceives that they are not paying for space because they have a workspace in a home that they either own or are renting.

Considering this possibility and the 16% that did identify their home as their workplace, three issues arise related to the artist economy: (1) Many artists are highly resourceful and adapt their practice in response to available resources. (2) Although not described as such, some artists currently operate in a live/work environment. (3) Given the importance of space to artists, and the lack of specificity here, this is an area that calls for further research.

For the 63% of respondent artists who are paying for space, annual costs range from a few hundred dollars per year to as much as \$75K. Most (29%), though, are paying less than \$5K per year for their creative workspace. Table 6 above shows the complete breakdown of these costs for all artists responding.

*By discipline:* Considering space needs by discipline, music and literary artists are more likely to say that they have adequate space; visual, theater, and, media are less likely. Music: 80.4%; literary: 77.8%; visual: 66.8%; theater: 68.7%; media: 70.2%.

*I live in an 800-square-foot house with little room for looms, storage of yarn and fiber, or metalsmithing equipment.*

—Multimedia Artist

*By income:* Predictably there is a correlation between income levels and access to adequate workspace. Those with under \$50K in personal income annually are somewhat less likely



to say they have adequate space (68%). For artists with more than \$50K personal income, 81% indicate that they have adequate space. Virtually all (90 %+ ) of the artists with incomes over \$100K have adequate space.

*Interest in live/work housing:* When asked about housing opportunities that combine opportunities for both living and working, 47% of respondents replied that they were interested. Those in the lower income categories were even more enthusiastic, with 60% expressing interest (see also *Table 9*).

**3.5 Access to needed equipment, etc.:** Respondents were asked if they have access to the equipment they need to do their work: yes = 71.5%; no = 27.8%. The high affirmative response is similar to the feedback on space adequacy. Fewer than 200 people identified specific equipment need.

*By discipline:* Music (75%) and literary artists (77.8%) are more likely than the total to say that they have adequate equipment. While theater artists are more concerned about this issue, a majority (61%) still answer that yes, they have access to the equipment they need.

*By income:* Understandably, those reporting less than \$10K in personal income are more likely to be concerned about equipment, but still a majority (60.4%) answered yes to this question. For those reporting over \$100K, 92%–100% said yes.

*The artists I work with and employ are like my family. Sometimes the family grows big, and sometimes it's quite small. Hard times like these call for solo shows with no sets and costumes from the thrift store. But from time to time we have a big family reunion.*

—Theater Artist

**3.6 Employment of others:** During 2011, the artists surveyed also reported hiring 4149 artists and non-artists as a part of their work. Averaged across the entire cohort, each participating artist produced 1.36 arts jobs and 0.37 non-artists jobs annually.

*By discipline:* Theater artists are much more likely to employ others, averaging 7.44 art jobs and 1.91 non-arts jobs annually. Visual artists are least likely to create additional positions, with an average of only 0.20 art and 0.18 non-arts jobs created.

*By income:* Not surprisingly, both the higher and mid-income groups are more likely to employ others, artists and non-artists. Those with \$100–\$125K employ 11 other artists and six non-artists annually. Those making over \$125K employed fewer workers,

but still more than the overall 3.5 artists and two non-artists average.

**3.7 Where artists work:** Most of the work is done close to home with two-thirds of the work is done locally and one-third regionally. National work is about 12% of the total for all disciplines. There is no significant difference indicated by income. There were slight variations according to discipline with music, media, and theater less likely than overall to

work locally. Visual and literary artists were more likely to work locally. Media artists in general, seem less locally oriented.

**3.8 Membership in unions and other associations:** Most of those who responded to this question checked “other union or guild” (52.1%). The musicians and theater artists had the highest representation among disciplines (selecting ASCAP, AF of M, SAG, AEA) with percentages between 10% and 15% each. Among the other artist-related organizations listed by respondents the following were mentioned most often: St. Louis Artist Guild, American Institute of Graphic Arts (AIGA), American Society of Media Photographers, and the National Art Education Association.

**3.9 Learning never stops:** Clearly, continuing practice and education are important to St. Louis artists. There was not much difference by discipline or income, except those in the lower-income groups were slightly more likely to say “self-taught.” Respondents to this question could choose more than one category.

In their narrative responses, access to other artists was described as an essential component of the lifelong learning that fuels artistic development. Learning from masters and critical input from colleagues were both mentioned.

**Table 7: Lifelong Learning from Many Sources**

Self-taught	59.2%
Apprenticeship	34.4%
Some college	26.9%
Associate's	6.8%
Bachelor's	39.2%
Graduate	23.2%
Ongoing	63.4%

Some artists described their need for periods of intense interaction with peers followed by equally deep isolation. Artist residencies were mentioned numerous times as a valuable resource that gives artists access to, and control over, both these conditions. The state's numerous universities were also thought of as a valuable forum for artists to interact with and learn from each other.

**3.10 Defining work:** When we asked artists to describe their work situation, the vast majority self-described as either “self-employed” or “freelance.” One interesting thing about this set of responses is the 13% who said that they did “not work for pay.” It should also be noted that this question allowed more than one selection. As such, about 70% of the respondents chose more than one of the descriptions shown on the next page in *Table 8*.

*By discipline:* Visual artists are slightly more likely than the total to say they are self-employed. The theater, music, and media respondents were much more likely to report working as contract or freelance artists.

*By income:* There is a linear reverse relationship between being self-employed and income. Those in the lowest-income category (less than \$10K personal income) are most likely to be self-employed (81%). Those in the \$125K+ category are least likely to be self-employed (62.5%). Predictably this group has a higher concentration of respondents working higher paying professions such as architecture or design.

**Table 8: Artists Have Diverse Work Lives**

Self-employed/sole proprietor	73.5%
Part-time employee	13.9%
Full-time employee	16.6%
Contract/freelance	35.4%
Volunteer	25.2%
Do not work for pay	13.2%

**3.11 The tax and legal frameworks employed by artists are varied:** In a related question about the legal and tax structures that artists use in the organization and development of their work, 57.2% say that they are sole proprietors; 15.6% are limited liability corps; 3.8% are partnerships, and 2.9% are S Corp. A little more than half of the Artists Count respondents (51.3%) file a Schedule C in their tax filings. Of the rest, 34.4% do not and 15.3% are not sure. Theater artists are more likely to have filed this document; literary less likely.

*Nonprofit status:* Only a small percentage of respondents indicated that they have their own 501(c)(3) (5.4%). The remaining 94.4% do not. Theater artists are more likely to have incorporated, with 15.2% indicating nonprofit status. There was no difference indicated by income.

*Fiscal sponsorships:* Of the total, 12.5% have used fiscal sponsorships and 87.5% have not. Theater artists are more likely to have used this support structure.

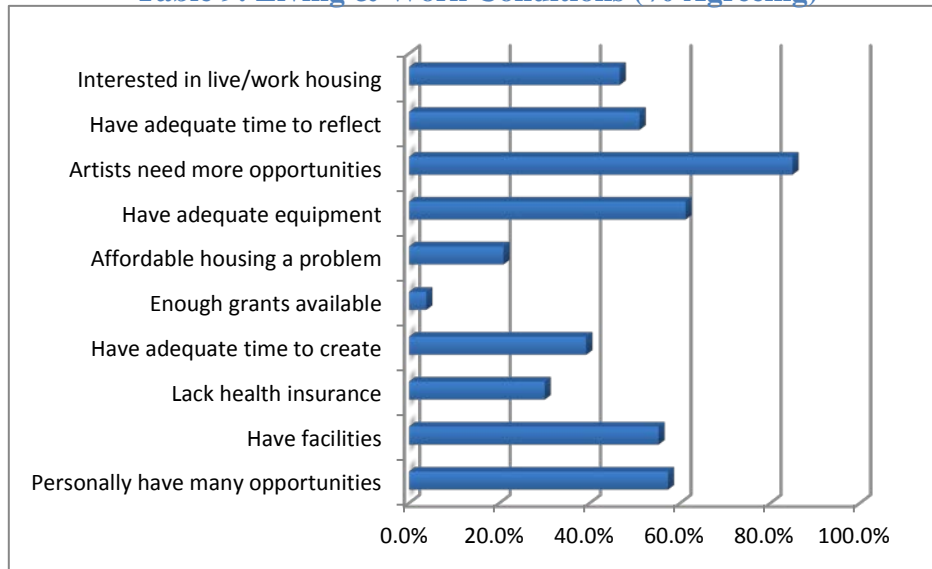
**3.12 Volunteering and bartering:** On average, respondents say that 27% of their work over the past year was volunteered and 9.87% was bartered. The literary artists are somewhat more likely to have volunteered their work. No difference by income is apparent. Bartering and volunteering evolves as a part of the informal networks of friends and associates that develop within the various disciplines. These networks were described as a critical marketplace for everything from space, supplies, and technical advice to provocative ideas. This area is explored in greater depth in Section 4, which deals with artist support systems.

*It's amazing  
what you can do  
with borrowed  
time, people,  
and stuff.*

—Spoken Word  
Artist

**3.13 Arts/work environment:** We asked artists to share their level of agreement with a series of statements related to their work conditions and environment. *Table 9* shows the percentage of respondents who checked “strongly agree” and “agree” for each item.

**Table 9: Living & Work Conditions (% Agreeing)**



Overall, the Artists Count cohort is not significantly dissatisfied with their work situation. They strongly favor having more grants available and believe that artists in general need more opportunities to work as artists. But their assessment of their own situation is more favorable. As with other studies, time for creative work is an issue. There is no apparent difference by discipline.

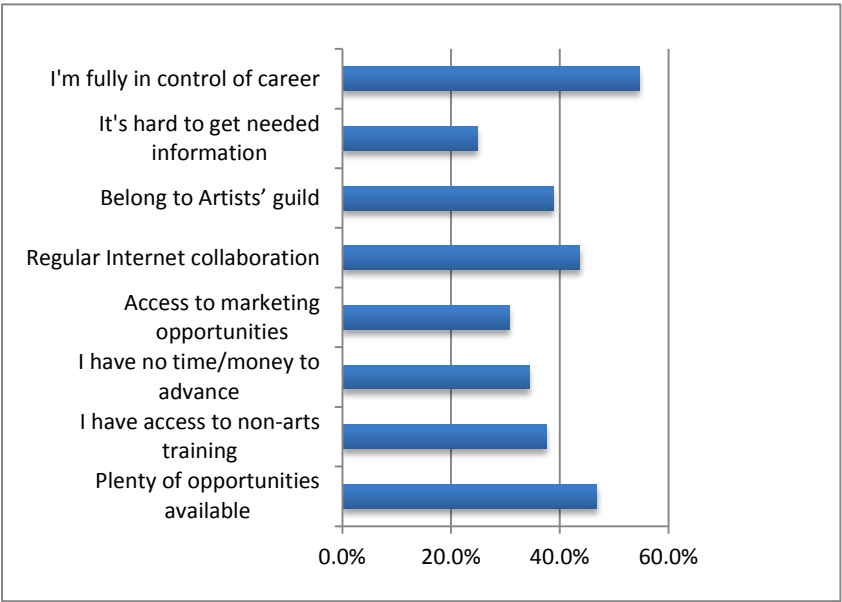
*By income:* There are, however, differences by income, primarily with those reporting lower personal income.

- 38.6% of those reporting less than \$10K in personal income agree or strongly agree that lack of health insurance is an issue, and 44.3% of the \$10K–\$25K say the same. This compares to 9% of the \$75K–\$125K+ cohort.
- About one-third (34.4%) of those with less than \$10K in personal income are concerned about affordable housing, and 42% are not.
- Finally, 60.5% of those with less than \$10K in personal income are interested in live/work housing, as are 54.4% of the \$10K–\$25K group. This compares to a little over 40% of the overall cohort expressing interest in this kind of housing. While not surprising, the high representation of lower income earning artists in this group has implications for the Commission’s interest in live/work resources for artists. This is discussed further in the recommendations section (4.3).

## 4. Career Support

**4.1 Availability of career-enhancing opportunities:** In this section we explored artists’ perceptions of their career options and opportunities. *Table 10* shows the level of agreement with a variety of statements about career circumstances. In most areas less than half of the respondents say that they have access to most of the resources they need for

**Table 10: Career Development Opportunities (% Agreeing)**



advancement. About one-third responded that they do not have the time or money to advance their careers. In spite of this, over half indicate that they are fully in control of their careers.

**4.2 Time is the essential element in the creative process:** It is not surprising that there is a strong focus on the creative process shared in the narrative responses of artists in this study. Given this, it is also not surprising that having the time to work also

figures prominently. Many artists mentioned time as an important part in their “best work” equation with most indicating that it was the most critical factor. This response was consistent across all disciplines.

- **All time is not equal:** Beyond having enough hours in the day to devote to art making, many artists talked about the kind of time that proved most valuable to their endeavors. About a fifth of those mentioning time as key preferred long periods that were peaceful, quiet, and free from distractions. Others described more complicated patterns, ones not only filled with intense stimulation by other artists, art (of all disciplines), and community life but also solo time for work and reflection.

Some performing artists distinguished between the time they need alone to create or practice, and the time devoted to translating and interpreting their work with others. Understandably, this collaborative aspect was characterized as much more complicated than solo work. Writers of all stripes described time apart or in isolation as essential, or in the words of one playwright, “the lifeblood.”

- **Stolen time:** Another issue that arose provides an interesting insight into the lives of artists. Many artists with outside jobs and family commitments extend their days by working very early or late in the day. Not surprisingly, lack of sleep is a prominent side

effect of this practice. Others admitted that they sometimes found themselves taking “family time” to complete their work.

### 4.3 Adequate financial support

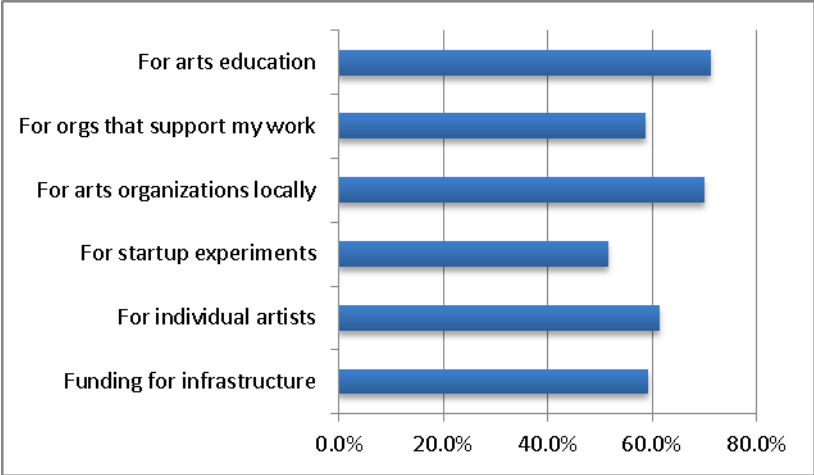
- Money equals time:** Just over 50% of the commentaries about work conditions mentioned money as critical to their ability to maintain their artistic practice and produce quality work. The vast majority of these artists characterized money as “buying the time” they need to work—in all shapes and sizes. A number also correlated the amount and continuity of the time purchased with the quality of the work produced. Conversely, when money is tight, artists said that they had to take on more “outside jobs” and, thus, have less time for making art.
 

*Time is like gold. It's also like quicksilver. But mostly, it's just not available.*

—Writer
- Money also buys peace of mind and arts essentials:** Some shared that financial stability provides a sense of security that is nurturing and allows for the work to proceed. The stress of not having money to cover the basics (shelter and health insurance were most often mentioned) makes it difficult to focus on creative work. For performing and visual artists, money is also needed for securing necessary studio space, supplies, equipment, and technical expertise. Interestingly, few performers remembered to include pay for themselves to the list of essentials that money can buy.
- Some jobs are better than others:** A number of artists indicted that they needed to work in some kind of “outside job” to survive. While some bemoaned this fact, a minority embraced their ancillary employment as a healthy and vital stimulant for their creative work. In almost all of these cases, the parallel jobs involved teaching of some kind.

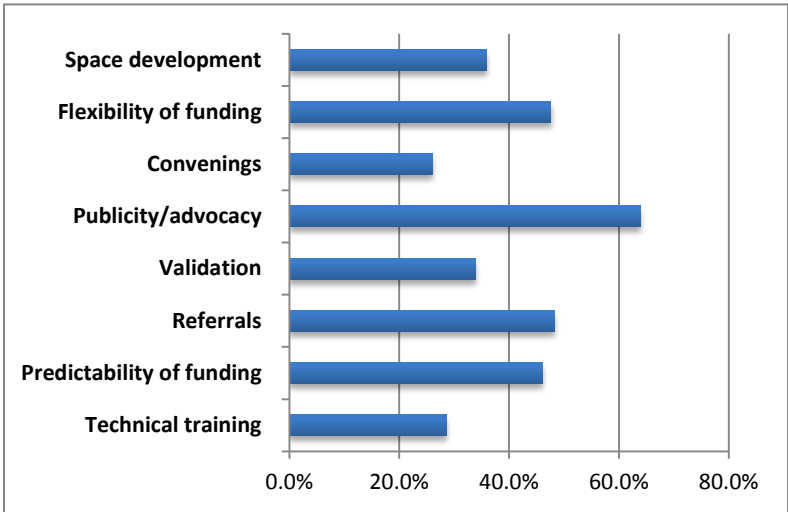
**4.4 The value of different funding strategies:** Another series of questions in this section explored artists’ perceptions of the importance and value of different funding approaches. *Table 11* on the next page, shows that the majority rated all of the options as “very important,” but there appears to be less interest in resources for start-ups than for other forms of support. It is interesting to note that the preference for organizations and arts education over funding for individual artists. This may reflect the typically indirect nature of funding for artists (through organizations or for teaching artists) as well as the relative lack of artist fellowships and/or commissions in the area.

**Table 11: Artists on Funding Priorities**



**4.5 Direct support is highly valued:** A few artists mentioned the importance of grants, fellowships and commissions as helping to “launch” them into being full-time artists.

**Table 12: Artists Appreciate All Kinds of Support**



Closer to home, a number of respondents specifically identified RAC support through funded arts organizations, technical assistance, and training as critical to the development of their careers. Some artists also reflected on what they described as “the unique nature of the region’s artist networks.”

**4.6 Value of other artist support strategies:** We also asked respondents to rate funder characteristics and artist services outside the realm of financial support. All of the support categories in *Table 12* were rated by over 70% of artists as either “somewhat important or very important.” To show which areas are most valued, the table only shows the percentage rating them as “very important.” It is interesting to note that only publicity/advocacy garnered more than half the responses. This also showed up as a priority when artists were asked in Section 5 of the survey about what they need to advance their careers. Although there seems to be less interest here in technical training and convenings, these activities were also identified as career-advancing priorities in Section 5.

**4.7 Families are a crucial foundation for many artists:** The importance of families represented in these artists’ responses cannot be understated here. It is clear from



commentaries throughout the study that families are a primary source of creative, financial, and moral support for many of the artists represented in this survey. References to parents, spouses, partners, children, in-laws, brothers, and sisters are peppered throughout. For many of these artists, it is clear that the constancy of commitment, belief, and even sacrifice that they have received from family members has provided a crucial foundation for their work as artists. This support has come in many forms:

- Family members, most notably spouses or partners, were often identified as creative collaborators who function as everything from co-creators and provocateurs to editors and critics.
- Others mention the income brought into the home by a spouse or the assistance received from in-laws who help with childcare or other home-based needs.
- The family as a safe space, sanctuary, or nurturing environment was a recurring theme.
- The ability to have and raise a family is described as a blessing and inspiration as well as a heavy responsibility.
- Some describe the impetus of their creative life as emanating from an artistic family life with the enthusiastic encouragement of their parents or grandparents.
- Some mentioned the importance of family support at difficult times in their careers.



## 5. Sharing Artistic Work

### 5.1 The region's artists are very busy on a wide variety of fronts:

One of our questions exploring how artists interact with their audiences asked artists to give us a picture of the variety of ways they establish relationships with various audiences. Their responses were extraordinarily varied with most artists describing multiple avenues for creative exchange, sharing, and commerce. It is important to note that this question was, by far the most demanding. In the survey in that we asked artists to describe both the "type of presentation" and "how many times this occurred in the past calendar year. Despite this, 62% took the time to answer.

The responses included traditional exhibitions, performances, and publications, online venues for marketing, sales and presentations as well as informal outlets such as churches and parties. We were also delighted with the numerous responses (dubbed "other") like "dog shows", "awards banquets", and "pecha kuchas" that were not so easily categorized.

*Table 13* summarizes this data. Because we left it up to each artist to define both audience and venue the results here are not particularly precise. They do, though, provide a fascinating record of the breadth of creative activity in the region. From our perspective, the most noteworthy pattern to emerge here is the layered nature of these artists' audience relationships. Fully, 72% indicated that they use two modes of presentation, and 46% said they use three. The number reporting four (25%) and five (12%) venues was particularly interesting. Predictably, exhibitions and

**Table 13: Artists Connect in Many Ways**

Type of Activity	# Artists Reporting	Total Instances	Ave. Instances/Artist
Commercial Service	22	394	17.9
Competition/ Contest	7	100	14.3
Demonstrations	17	470	27.7
Digital Venue and Sales	275	Ongoing	NA
Exhibitions	569	3036	5.3
Film Screening	19	101	5.3
Mail Art	5	114	22.9
Murals/Public Art	18	167	9.2
One on One Sharing	21	100	15.6
Parties/Events	22	348	15.8
Publications	54	397	7.4
Radio/Television	13	200	15.4
Recording	6	40	6.8
Religious Venues	32	268	8.3
Retail/Consignment	11	78	7.0
Talk/Lecture	47	601	13.0
Teach/Workshop/Class	73	1428	1.6
Visual Art Fair/Festival	43	807	18.8
Performance (general)	130	2171	16.7
Performance (Dance)	20	240	12.0
Performance (Literary)	48	415	8.7
Performance (Music)	195	3405	17.5
Performance (Theater)	67	1650	24.6
<b>Performance (Total)</b>	<b>460</b>	<b>7881</b>	<b>17.1</b>
Other	108	805	7.5

performances of various types comprise the lion's share (43%) of these interactions. It is also worth noting that digital venues, which are not limited by time or facility, are represented across all disciplines with many functioning in partnership with traditional presenting modes. As a percentage of the total, though, the Internet seems under represented with only 13% naming it as a venue. A subset of the Internet users (14%) described it as their sole outlet.

**5.2 Artists utilize a variety of strategies and organizational relationships to present their work:** Respondents were asked what percentage of their work opportunities fall into various production categories. *Table 14*, below, shows that although “self-produced” is the largest category, it is still less than half. There is a fairly good spread among the other

**Table 14: Artists Work Independently and with Partners**

<b>Self-produced</b>	<b>46.21%</b>
<b>For nonprofit arts</b>	<b>32.42%</b>
<b>For profit arts</b>	<b>21.84%</b>
<b>For public agencies</b>	<b>10.13%</b>
<b>For informal community groups</b>	<b>14.22%</b>
<b>For private individuals</b>	<b>11.85%</b>

sources of work, with public agencies providing the lowest number of opportunities.

**5.3 Some presenting and producing venues are crucial creative partners and incubators:** Many of our respondents recognized that a healthy cultural ecology has both a continuum of artists at various stages of development, and a diversity of venues

that offer opportunities for production and presentation in support of that development. Performing artists discussed how these venues also facilitate the transition of artwork from originating artist (e.g., composers, playwrights, choreographers, etc.) to interpreting artists (e.g., musicians, actors, dancers, etc.).

There was also an understanding that these creative spaces serve as the bridge between the creative products and local audiences looking for arts experiences. It is striking that large cultural organizations were rarely referenced as being a part of an artist's support system. For these artists, it is clear that most creative incubation and development takes place on the stages and in the galleries of the region's many small and mid-sized arts organizations.

**5.4 While intermediaries are an important link to the audience, many artists are looking for alternatives to connecting directly with audiences:**

A number of artists named intermediaries, distributors, or venues as their sole connection with their audiences. Most of those artists were involved in the visual arts, ceramics, or filmmaking. Community art centers were cited as particularly helpful. Several artists across disciplines described moves away from intermediaries and toward development of

*Unfortunately, that is one aspect I have yet to discover. As I sell most of my work through galleries, I really don't know who appreciates it and buys it, as the galleries make those connections. I rarely get to know who they are.*

—Ceramicist

their own audiences and connections. Some said that new technology had increased their ability to distribute or exhibit their own work. They said that this gave them greater control of their audience relationships. This was particularly noticeable in responses from musicians, composers, and photographers.

**5.5 St. Louis is an active center for cross-sector creative collaborations:** An increasing number of artists and arts organizations across the country are working with local partners from other community sectors to help build healthier and more

productive communities. For the past two decades, The Regional Arts Commission has been recognized as a leader in the growing, creative placemaking movement. RAC funds arts programs across sectors and since 1997 developed the Community Arts Training (CAT) Institute, an innovative program fostering

**Table 15: Artists Work Across Community**

<b>Community development</b>	<b>27.6%</b>
<b>Environmental groups</b>	<b>11.7%</b>
<b>Human services</b>	<b>13.1%</b>
<b>Health</b>	<b>12.7%</b>
<b>Education</b>	<b>63.1%</b>
<b>Public safety</b>	<b>4.2%</b>
<b>Youth work</b>	<b>18.9%</b>
<b>Park/recreation</b>	<b>20.6%</b>
<b>Other</b>	<b>15.9%</b>

successful partnerships among artists, social workers, educators, policy makers, and community activists with the goal of creating significant arts programs in community settings. The Artists Count survey results show that a significant number of artists have been actively working with other types of community sectors over the past year. These cross-sector relationships include collaborations between artists and education, youth work, community development, parks, social services, recreation and the like.

**5.6 Some artists feel that their ability to connect deeply with audiences is compromised by limited access to available and affordable venues.** Interdisciplinary, visual, and ceramic artists raised this issue more often. A few expressed hope that they would be able to move into their own studios in the near future. Those who do have their own studios prized the space as a precious asset for connecting with audiences and peers.

**5.7 Profound changes in the publishing, film, and music industries have challenged artists to rethink how to reach and cultivate their audiences.** For authors, musicians, and filmmakers, the distribution process is as important as the act of creating the art.

*A new area I am pursuing is the creation of storybook and game apps for mobile devices like the iPad.*

—Painter

Changes in these industries have significantly altered artists' relationships with their audiences. As one writer observes, "the massive changes . . . in the past decade have left me in charge of much more than ever before: marketing, developing outlets, building fan bases, creating support materials and activities." While the process has become longer and more expensive for the artist, he or she also has more autonomy and control.

Many of the responding artists described using various media and websites. Somewhat

fewer appear to have begun exploring social media. A majority of the literary artists noted the continued importance of live readings (at intermediaries or bookstores) as a primary way of connecting to their audiences.

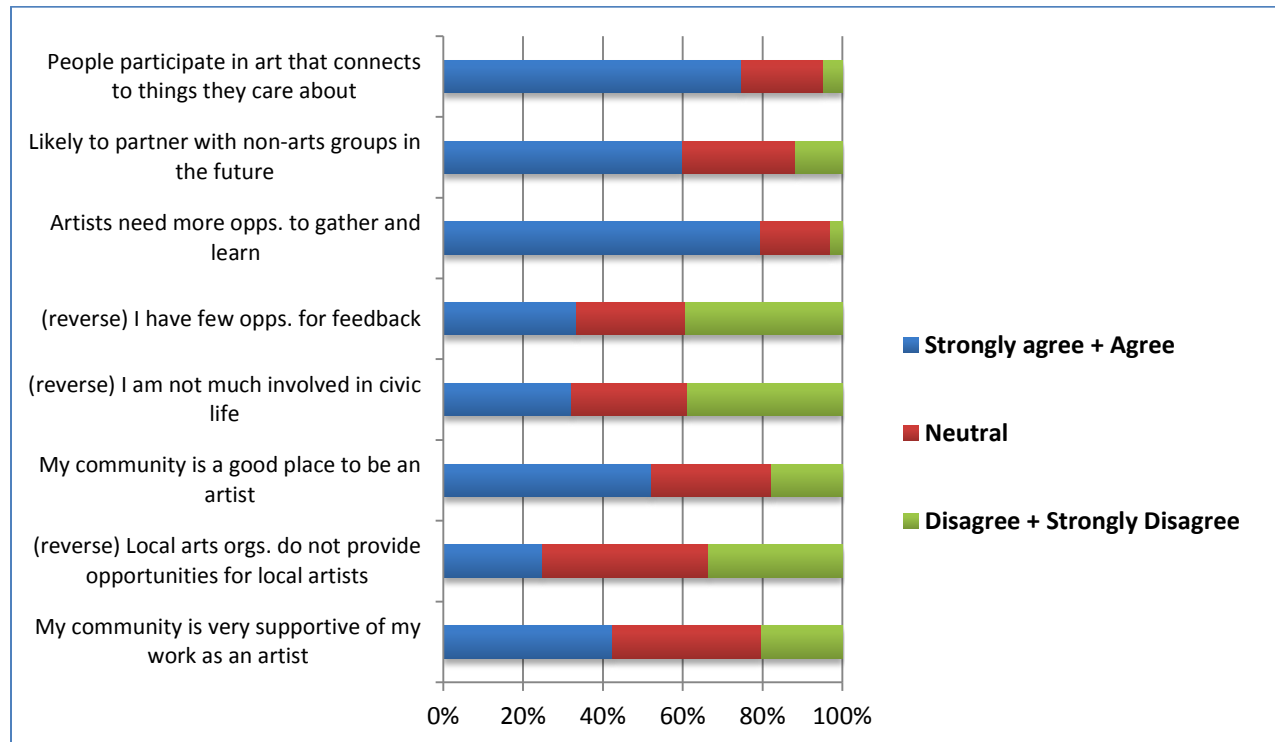
**5.8 Technological change has created both opportunity and challenge for artists seeking audiences.** Most of the respondents indicated that they rely on in-person contacts with the audience as their primary means of connection. This includes performance and being on-site at exhibitions and art crawls, readings, studio tours, and pre-concert discussions or post-play talkbacks. Some artists are blending performance with social gatherings or linking issue-based artworks with community meetings or mounting “flash events” through social media. It is not clear whether events mix artists and community members in performances.

Intermediaries and distributors were the second most frequently mentioned means of connection. When web/online and social media categories were combined, they ranked third. It appears that web/online use crossed disciplines, gender, and geography. While there were users in all age demographics, the heaviest concentrations were among those in their 30s and 40s.

## 6. The Place of Artists in the Community

**6.1 Artists are cautiously optimistic about their prospects in the St. Louis region:** In this section we explored respondent's perceptions of public attitudes toward art and artists, opportunities for learning and feedback, and cross-sector work. Please note that some statements are affirmative in nature and others, noted as *reverse*, pose negative statements.

**Table 16: Artists Speculate about Art and Community**



The levels of agreement for most of statements in *Table 16* were fairly even with a slight tendency toward the positive end. There is also a surprisingly large proportion that checked “neutral” on many items. This could be a reflection of the 40% who feel that they have few opportunities for knowledgeable feedback, as well as the strong view (80%) that artists need more opportunities for networking.

In finding 5.5, a minority indicated that they had collaborated with non-arts groups. Here, 60% indicate that they are open to such work in the future. This, combined with the almost 40% who say that they are not much involved in civic life, suggests a potential for growth in this area.

**6.2 There is a diversity of opinion among artistic disciplines about the place of art in the community:** Some differences by discipline emerged in responses to this question. All comparisons are based on the average level of agreement among all responses.

- *There is strong community support for artists:* Musicians and theater artists are somewhat more likely to agree with this; visual artists less likely.
- *There is a lack of support by local organizations:* Theater artists agreed significantly more with this statement while literary artists agreed much less.
- *This is a good place to be an artist:* The literary cohort was more partial to this statement, but visual artists were less likely to agree with it.
- *I am not much involved in civic life:* Literary and visual artists are more likely to agree. Those involved in theater are much less likely to agree while musicians and media artists are somewhat less likely to agree.
- *There are few opportunities for feedback:* Not surprisingly visual artist and media artists are more likely to agree. Literary, music and theater artists, less so.
- *Artists need more opportunities for gathering/networking:* It is interesting to compare this to the previous item. Again, both visual, and media artists express a need for opportunities to connect.
- *I will work with non-arts organizations in future:* The media cohort is more likely to agree with this (67.9%). This correlates with other data from this survey that shows that media artists are more likely than the other disciplines to be working with non-arts groups outside of education.
- *People participate in art that reflects what they know and care about:* The music, theater, and media group are more likely to agree, whereas the two more solitary disciplines (visual, literary) are less likely to agree.

*The artist's place is to create and inspire, to touch hearts and challenge minds, to encourage others to view things from a unique perspective.*

—Visual Artist

**6.4 Many artists feel that the presence of a productive community of individual artists is critical to the overall health of community life.** In their narrative comments, a number of artists said that they felt individual artists were essential to community, cultural vitality, and sustainability. But they also observed that public and private funding policies tended not to reflect this line of thinking. Some compared this to the lingering negative effect of the “culture wars” of the 1990s, which eventually led to the elimination of most public sector support for individual artists. A few said that they were heartened by the fact that RAC seemed to have a renewed interest in artists’ issues.



*My neighborhood arts center is the best model of an artistic community in St. Louis. Not just because it provides a space for artistic expression, critique, and development, but because it does all of this while constantly asking “What’s best for the sustainability of the community?” With their support over the past six years, I’ve sculpted an artistic lifestyle that I am able to sustain and that unconditionally serves the community.*

—Visual Artist

### **6.5 Some observed that individual artists are key to broadening and deepening cultural participation.**

A few of our respondents observed that building new audiences within what are often described as “under resourced” communities is best facilitated through the advancement of artists working in and for those communities. The contention here is that, like political participation, community arts access and ownership is best built from the ground up on a foundation of local culture and trusted relationships. We would concur, with the caveat that this support must be consistent and predictable. To be truly effective, artists’ support must also be coupled with a sustained effort to advance the development of the cultural infrastructure (institutions, networks, training, etc.) that eventually emerge in an artist-rich environment.

### **6.6 Artists understand that small and mid-sized arts organizations link artists, art, and communities.**

About 75% of our respondents “strongly agreed” or “agreed” with the statement “People are more likely to participate in art that connects to the things they care about.” In their comments, artists said that a lot of this “connecting” occurs in local and neighborhood arts venues that are small enough to truly know their audiences. They also told us that the most effective arts leaders both understood their communities and the role(s) that artists played in them. It stands to reason that venues operating with this kind of sensibility will feature the work of artists (often local) that reflects and validates the things that people care about. It is in these circumstances that audience members are most likely to appreciate and embrace the intrinsic connection between the art they like and the artist(s) who made it.

**6.7 Most artists function within a complex and multifaceted support system.** In their narrative responses, artists shared their thoughts about the environment that stimulates and supports their work.

- **The diverse and interdependent nature of artists’ support networks:** Not surprisingly, few artists rely on only one form of support. This echoes the responses to our questions exploring the artist economy. Most often, this mix of support comes from different people and institutions that artists interact with on a regular basis. (These include family, friends, artist peers and colleagues, service organizations, vendors, presenters and curators, and their venues.) Most of the artists described these elements as both interconnected and interdependent. The patterns that emerged in these network descriptions were, predictably, reflective of the kinds of relationships that are particular to specific artistic disciplines. Theater artists, for example, described the mix

of roles (actors, directors, costume and lighting designers, dramaturges, etc.) that they rely on to produce a play. Writers mentioned editors, agents, and publishers.

- **Artists rely most on their peers for support:** Many artists described their fellow artists as an indispensable part of their support system. For many, moral support and critical feedback were at the top of their list of needs fulfilled by their creative colleagues. For performers, the collaborative nature of their work clearly transcended their functional dependencies. Many described the sense of “community” or “family” that defined these creative relationships, both during production and within their local artist community.
- **Some artists have organized support groups to advance their work:** A number of artists indicated that they were members of an association or a group of artists who met regularly to share ideas, offer critiques, and provide general encouragement. These gatherings were described as critical to their ability to grow as artists. Some shared that their particular group had helped them through particularly rough patches during their careers. Writers, likely because of the solitary nature of their work, mentioned these groups most often.

*There's a bizarre network that you have to be a part of to get wind of potential work. If you aren't a part of it, it's hard to survive.*

—Musician



## 7. Reflections on the Artist's Life

*In the early 1980s the San Francisco Institute of Art conducted a study of its most accomplished graduates to discern the qualities that contributed most to their success. They were surprised to find that dogged persistence trumped both talent and training. The responses in this section of our research reinforce this notion. It also extends our understanding of “creative persistence” as a product of both internal drive and a complex mix of external stimulation and support.*

**7.1 A constellation of influences spurred these individuals to become artists:** In the last section of the survey, we asked artists what drew them to the arts. The influences most commonly described focus on the inherent excitement that comes with art making, the creative challenge, and love of the process itself. Many described their attraction as lifelong in character, as a calling they could not ignore. Other motivating factors included the influence of family, education, and the recognition and presumably encouragement of one's talent.

### Passion

Love art making	30%
The arts chose me	3%
It was my calling	2%
Lifelong attraction	9%
Love of learning	1%
Love of teaching	1%

### Influences

Exposure to art	4%
Family	12%
Job setting	5%
Educational stimulus	10%
Mentors	3%

### Drive

Creative challenge	7%
Intense curiosity	2%
Need to express	4%

### To contribute to community

	4%
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### Talent

	8%
--	----

## 7.2 Creating and refining artwork

- **The creative process is the driving force of artists' work:** Nearly 90% of the artists queried said that involvement with the creative process itself was the prime motivation for their continued commitment to art-making. While descriptions and definitions of the “creative process” varied widely, most contained aspects of the following:
  1. *Exploration:* discovery through experimentation and invention
  2. *Innovation:* developing something new from existing materials or patterns
  3. *Synthesis:* putting unique ideas/concepts/sounds together
  4. *Translating:* crafting creative ideas into something meaningful to others

This was consistent across all disciplines, ages, genders, and racial/ethnic groups. Some respondents went to great length describing the “essential,” “compelling,” even “obsessive” nature of their involvement in the process of art making.

- **Audiences as stimulus:** Some performing artists described audiences as a part of their creative process. Although a few mentioned the satisfaction of positive feedback from receptive audiences or critics, the absence of this element in most of the respondents' answers here is noteworthy. When audience was mentioned, the encounter was often described more in terms of relationship building rather than reward (i.e., "engaging," "making connection with," "transforming").

### 7.3 Mastering and refining artistry

- **Honing one's craft:** Along with the centrality of the creative process, many artists also shared their enthusiasm for the development of new skills and techniques. Improving, deepening, even redefining one's craft was described as a potent and inevitable element of the creative journey. One actress talked about the joy she felt at becoming a "mature artist" and having "confidence in my art form." Another described "having the skills to both do what I intend and discover new territory" as "deeply satisfying."

*Looking for and finding  
beauty, the world becomes  
very alive.*

—Ceramic Artist

- **The thrill of completion:** Finishing an artistic product or performance was also mentioned as an inspiring aspect of art making, both for the joy of completion and the prospect of beginning anew. A number of artists alluded to the cyclic nature of the creative process as being particularly stimulating.

### 7.4 Discovering new ideas and solutions

- **Exploring new worlds:** Many artists cited the thrill of studying and learning about new areas of knowledge relevant to their work. Whether it was history, or science, or community issues, being in a position to follow an often indirect or even nonspecific path of inquiry was described variously as a kind of "privilege," a "guilty pleasure," or engendering a sense of freedom. Some artists particularly valued the travel opportunities their work provided. Tangentially, freedom was also mentioned as a treasured state of mind associated with unfettered learning and the creative process.
- **Exploring deep and profound questions:** A small number of artists wrote that their art making has provided them with a way to engage transcendent questions (death, life, God, what it means to be human, etc.). One artist described his work as a kind of "bridge" for connecting "day-to-day experiences with more profound questions about life." Some alluded to this as another way of exploring the creative process.
- **Addressing contemporary issues (psychological, social, economic, political):** About 3% of the artists mentioned the opportunities they had to contribute to their communities as particularly gratifying. Some indicated that this was a primary motivator for their creative activities.

## 7.5 Working with and teaching others

- Collaboration with other artists:** Nearly 10% of the artists mentioned their work with colleagues in response to this question. Predictably, this was truer for performing artists than for those involved in the visual arts or writing. For these performers, both creating and presenting partnerships were described as rewarding and, not surprisingly, essential.
- Collaboration across disciplines and sectors:** About half of those who cited collaboration mentioned interdisciplinary work as an exciting facet of their careers. This was an area where some of the writers and visual artists specifically mentioned the pleasure of partnerships. They found themselves particularly stimulated or provoked by processes used by other artists who used different creative approaches, ideas, or mediums. A smaller number of artists said that working with colleagues from non-arts disciplines (e.g., scientists, social workers, educators) had also sparked new creative thinking.
- Teaching others:** A small number of artists (4%) described teaching as an important part of their creative life. For these artists, their work imparting artistic skills and concepts was seen as intrinsic to their creative development. One musician, with a medical condition that prevented her from playing for long periods, described her teaching as a vital extension of her creative process.
- Financial rewards are not particularly exciting:** Very few (less than 1%) mentioned being excited about the financial rewards of their careers. This is not surprising given the fact that in their responses to our income question very few (22%) indicated that they supported themselves solely by making art. Although reputation, particularly among peers, was mentioned; fame, per se, was not.

*I'm excited about being in the studio and making the work, having the work create dialogue, and bringing the excitement of creating art and creative opportunities to youth within the community.*

—Photographer

## 8. The Artist Ecosystem in the St. Louis Region

**8.1 These artists know what they are doing:** Despite the obvious challenges articulated in the previous sections of this report, many of the artists in this group have succeeded in maintaining artistic careers over multiple decades. Given this, we would posit that their collective experience could also be characterized as a kind of laboratory for learning how artists survive, working over time, under a broad range of conditions. From the information they have shared, it is clear that many of our respondents are students not only of their respective art forms but also of the nuanced strategies and practices that comprise their artistic lives. The manner and detail of their commentaries tell us how acutely aware they are of the strategies, systems, networks, and relationships they rely on to maintain their practice. Through them, we also come to know that many of these artists feel an obligation and a willingness to share what they have learned with others who are early in their careers.

**8.2 Artists are intensely interactive:** So much of what is shared in this and the other sections of this report gives lie to the stereotype that many artists are isolated and disconnected from the world around them. By definition, performers are, of course, engaged in a collaborative enterprise. But, according to our respondents, so are writers, craft and visual artists, and composers who depend on a broad spectrum of relationships to successfully negotiate the complex demands of their creative lives. In their answers in the final section respondents across all disciplines referenced building and nurturing relationships as an important survival strategy. This finding is reinforced by research conducted by the University of Pennsylvania's Social Impact of the Arts Project. Their decades-long studies of artists and arts organizations in Philadelphia neighborhoods showed that cultural workers produce remarkably dense networks of social and professional relationships. They have found that these relationships not only support artists' work but also generate a critical mass of social capital that demonstrably benefits their communities.

**8.3 These essential survival skills and strategies are not taught in school:** Many of the most basic and common sense lessons shared in this section are not typically found in academic curricula used to train artists. Some artists spoke directly to this issue saying that they learned most of the skills they needed to function effectively in the art world after graduation. Some even went so far as to say that some of the things they learned in art schools made it harder to make it in the real world—and that these things needed to be unlearned. This reinforces the need for artists to have access to ongoing career-development training offered by some artist service organizations.

**8.4 For many artists, creative decisions are life decisions:** Some professions allow workers a reasonable degree of separation between the professional and personal aspects of their lives. This is certainly not true for a good number of the artists responding to this survey. From their feedback, we get a vivid portrait of the highly integrated and interdependent nature of artists' personal and work lives. For many, everyday artistic choices are intrinsically tied to personal finances or family circumstances, and personal

decisions—such as whether to marry or have children, or where to live, are all intertwined with their art-making lives.

**8.5 The information garnered from Artists Count provides a unique window into the often-contradictory aspects of artists' lives:** Some of our respondents shared advice that suggested how a creatively committed individual's needs evolve over time—that what is appropriate for one season of life, doesn't suit a later time. For some artists, this means that living as an artist inherently involves navigating paradox. Not surprisingly, a few of our respondents even provided advice that pushes in two directions at once. Here are a few examples:

*Never forget the audience, but make work for yourself first.*

*You need to be incredibly humble and incredibly arrogant.*

*The cards are stacked against you; do it anyway.*

Some artists framed their comments in a larger philosophical context by addressing the purpose of art and the role of artist in society. Here are two striking examples:

*I tell artists coming up that the role of the artist is to infiltrate every aspect of society and to use their distinct problem-solving skills to make the world a better place. If they persevere at this alone, they should have a satisfying art career.*

*I encourage new artists to consider how they wish to live their life "at large." Consider the larger interdisciplinary world so that they can fulfill a broader range of interests and possibly have a greater impact on the role of aesthetics within our culture. Unfortunately, a utilitarian approach to the world causes our own destruction, whereas the arts can make such a tremendous difference to our well being. I believe new artists can play a vital role in turning this around.*

## Part Three:

### *Recommendations*

The following recommendations are provided to inform and guide the St. Louis Regional Arts Commission (RAC) as it considers new initiatives in support of the region's artists. This input is based on findings from research conducted from January to August of 2012. It is based on data from over 3,000 artists living in the St. Louis region in seven specific areas of inquiry covered in the previous section.

Our recommendations serve multiple purposes. First and foremost, they suggest ways to improve or enhance the region's artist ecosystem, taking into account the limitations inherent to publicly funded institutions. We also hope that the following ideas and observations will provoke further inquiry into both the structure and dynamics of the region's artist ecosystem and RAC's place in it. With this in mind, some of our recommendations suggest direct action by the Commission. In other cases, we encourage joint action and/or advocacy with appropriate partners.

The recommendations address five specific areas relevant to the development of artist programs and services in the St. Louis region. These include the following:

- 1. Direct Support for Artists**
- 2. Other Direct Support Options**
- 3. Artist Support Services**
- 4. Community Cultural Development**
- 5. Program Design and Implementation**

## 1. Direct Support for Artists

**1.1 Establish a fellowship award program:** Unfortunately, since the elimination of most of the NEA's individual artists' fellowships in the 1980s and 1990s, direct support for artists in the United States, both locally and nationally, has diminished considerably. In recent years, there has been a growing realization among some funders that this lack of support has been shortsighted. The Regional Arts Commission's interest in exploring new ways to support artists establishes it as a leader among local arts agencies in this regard.

Merit-based fellowship programs are regarded as one of the most equitable and efficient ways to support artists in the field. We believe they are the most efficient way to support the advancement of individual artists' careers. Most fellowship grants are awarded based on the depth and quality of an artist's body of work, with little or no strings attached. Over time, they help to validate artists within the broader community and establish a standard of excellence among artists. They also distinguish a community as "artist friendly" which, in turn, helps to both retain and attract artists to the area. As such, we offer the following program framework:

*Fellowship awards: \$20K–\$25K:* The most significant question for funders is how they want their fellowships to affect artists' careers. If the Commission decides to establish a fellowship program, we encourage a design that emphasizes depth and quality. Our studies in other jurisdictions have shown that there is an award threshold, in the \$20K–\$50K range, that allows artists to truly change their status quo practice. This level of fellowship provides the impetus needed for artists to set aside periods of time for study, reflection, experimentation, and exploration; take advantage of opportunities; and/or work on a new project. We recommend starting by offering minimum one-year fellowships at this level in four discipline categories (visual, performing, literary, and media arts). If needed, awards in specific disciplines can be made annually, on a rotating basis.

**1.2 Make sudden opportunity awards a key element of any new support strategy.** One of the most consistent concerns articulated by artists is the long lead-time inherent in most grant programs. Based on this feedback, it is clear that many short-term opportunities and/or critical needs are going unmet because of a lack of quick-response capacity by funders or service providers. We anticipate that the need for quick-turnaround resources will only increase as technology and the growing community of entrepreneurial artists make their presence felt.

In response, we recommend that a quick-response fund be included in the design of the Commission's artist support program. We would define "quick response" as a completed request and award sequence from four to six weeks for amounts in the \$1,500–\$3,000 range. We would advise a very simple application and decision process, vetted by a small number of staff and/or readers. We would also encourage giving the program the power to both solicit and initiate applications to this fund. The criteria should be broad and flexible, but have as its primary focus investment opportunities that:



1. Demonstrably advance an artist's career and/or professional development
2. Cannot be addressed through normal grant or service program avenues

## 2. Other Direct Support Options

**2.1 Consider flex options for fellowships:** We also encourage the Commission to explore ways to increase the usefulness and versatility of the fellowship experience for artists. Consider adopting flexible time and payment parameters to increase the versatility of the program. Artists who have the option of spreading payments over time might add components from other sources (artists' retreats, sabbatical, travel grants) to extend the intensity and value of the fellowship. Also, consider fellowships or awards devoted to specific goals: R&D, spreading ideas, training colleagues, mentoring.

**2.2 Include traditional and folk masters:** The expansion of the informal cultural sector offers opportunities to expand the scope and impact of fellowships. As this sector has grown, so has the need to recognize and support the traditional and folk arts masters whose expertise defines and leads their fields. Such a fellowship program would need to pay particular attention to accessibility for members of the community who are not well acquainted with granting processes.

**2.3 Respond to the proliferation of both interdisciplinary and cross-sector art making:** Given the increasingly cross-sector and multidisciplinary nature of contemporary art making, it might also be worthwhile to establish an interdisciplinary fellowship. It would be useful to broaden the definition of interdisciplinary work to include collaborations between artists and colleagues from other sectors such as science, community development, or even politics. Another option might be to provide a fellowship-like award for creative leadership in arts management.

**2.4 Distinguished Artist Award:** This type of fellowship would recognize an individual artist for artistic excellence as well as significant impact on the region's cultural life over several decades. We would encourage a program for artists in all disciplines that uses a nomination process. Artists who achieved their primary successes elsewhere, however, should not be eligible. No one should receive the award more than once.

## 3. Artist Support Services

**3.1 Career development:** Many of the artists in this study identified themselves directly or indirectly as being self-managed. Over the course of their careers, most artists will need to be administratively adept enough to sustain their practice. As such, we believe that the Community Arts Training (CAT) Institute and the Volunteer Lawyers and Accountants for the Arts (VLAA) counseling and Business Edge workshops are valuable and needed services for the region's artists. Given the obvious need, these types of services need to be significantly expanded, particularly with regard to marketing with an emphasis on increasing the understanding and use of the Internet as a primary venue for presentation and commerce.



It is also apparent that some older, more advanced artists would benefit from an even more rigorous brand of career development. Although quite expensive, Creative Capital's success in helping top artists strengthen their creative and earning capacities is a case in point. We believe that there is a need for this kind of continuous professional development in the region.

**3.2 Aggregating organic artist support networks:** Many artists make a lot with very little by leveraging indigenous networks that connect them to the people, places, and materials they need to fulfill their artistic aims. It is not surprising that many artists in this study acknowledged his or her participation in one of these small, self-organized support systems. The size and scope of these informal networks are determined by the needs and time available to the artists who depend on them. Given how important they are to the healthy functioning of the artist ecosystem, we feel that the Commission should explore how digital aggregation of these resources might increase their versatility, efficiency, and usefulness.

Aggregation, consolidation, and compilation are all common business practices in the digital marketplace. Exemplars include dozens of travel consolidators like Kayak, Priceline, and Hotwire, purveyors of goods and services like Amazon.com and Overstock.com, and, of course, the ubiquitous online want-ad bulletin board/marketplace provided by "Craig's list".

The development of a "St. Louis Artist List" could provide the region's artists with easier access to the diverse stream of creative nutrients (materials, spaces, expertise, ideas, audiences, funding, partners, initiatives, gigs, patrons, surplus, questions, etc.) they need to feed their art making, presenting, and audience development. Such a system could not only stimulate the health and proliferation of these indigenous systems but also exponentially increase their usefulness. The result would be a self-organized creative marketplace whose applications and utility would be determined by its users.

**3.3 Artist employment service:** Create a solicitation and aggregation service that provides arts and non-arts job listings that are particularly suited for artists. Such a list could emphasize employers who are both interested in creative types and offer flexible, adaptable employment situations that accommodate the ebb and flow of artists' lives.

**3.4 Convening can strengthen the artist ecosystem:** Artists are often either absent or have a token presence in the strategic conversations that affect their work conditions and markets. In addition to digital networking, there is a need for face-to-face discussions among artists and organizations that support artists in order to:

- Allow artists to connect and learn from each other
- Identify and act on cross-community and cross-discipline issues
- Provide a basis for conversations and program/policy development across disciplines

- Promote innovation and self-organizing among artists and artist-serving organizations
- Give small and mid-sized arts organizations that are working to nurture artists' development a coherent and discernible voice in both the cultural community and the broader community

**3.5 Incentivize exemplary, innovative contributions to the artist ecosystem:** The questions used in this study were informed by a set of vitality indicators for artists that came from research<sup>10</sup> on artists' needs. Based on both this research and the Artists Count data, we have developed a framework that outlines the characteristics of artist-nurturing organizations (see *Appendix A*). We recommend that the Commission review these criteria and consider incorporating some of them into its process for funding arts organizations. We also encourage the Commission to consider creating a recognition program for organizations that shows leadership in support of artist development.

**3.6 Investigate new ways to respond to artists' initiatives developed outside of the traditional nonprofit framework:** It is clear that an increasing number of artists are concerned about how the nonprofit organizational model influences, and even limits, the depth and range of their art making. Often, nonprofit status is used to qualify for funding, but does not fit the actual requirements of the work. As such, there is a growing interest in exploring new models for supporting projects that require material resources and staffing but not the sustained structural support of an organization. As such, we strongly encourage the Commission to consider developing fiscal sponsorship criteria and guidelines that satisfy its requirements for stability and accountability.

**3.7 Work to make affordable health care available to the region's artists:** Regardless of whether the Affordable Care Act remains the law of the land, availing artists of affordable health care could be one of the most significant things the Commission could do to strengthen the region's cultural sector. The lack of access to affordable health care undermines individual artists' careers and the stability of many of the arts organizations that support their work. We encourage the Commission to investigate ways to advance this issue.

## 4. Community Cultural Development

**4.1 Stimulate St. Louis's naturally-occurring cultural clusters:** Explore this strategy using the creative community development framework developed by the Social Impact of the Arts Project<sup>11</sup> (SIAP) to guide the Commission's work with neighborhoods with high concentrations of artists (see *Section 1.2*). Over the past two decades Susan Seifert and Mark Stern have been researching the effect of art and culture on neighborhood development. They have concluded that neighborhoods with very dense, highly interactive networks of artists and arts organizations produce specific benefits for those communities.

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10. Research conducted by the Urban Institute, Artist Trust, LINC, and the Center for the Study of Art & Community.

11 Susan Seifert, Mark Stern, University of Pennsylvania <http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/siap/>

These benefits include poverty reduction, population retention and growth, and increased civic participation. They also report that the presence of these creative assets produces high levels of “cross-participation” that stimulates residents’ involvement in other civic activities. Considered in the light of the SIAP findings, we feel that Artists Count research can be a significant impetus for neighborhood cultural development. (In order to provide a more complete description of SIAP’s work, please see the recent paper describing the research attached in Appendix C of this report.)

**4.2 Stimulate local creative leadership and placemaking with neighborhood art houses:** The study shows growing interest among artists for working with non-arts entities and communities. There is also a strong interest in artist residencies. The Pink House project, developed by Beyond Housing and the Rebuild Foundation with partial support from RAC is a neighborhood cultural center and model that offers opportunities for both. This project combines three simple but powerful cultural development strategies:

1. The re-purposing of local housing for use as a neighborhood cultural center
2. An arts animated program designed with and for the community
3. Placemaking facilitation and stewardship provided by a well-trained community artist in residence working in partnership with community members.

Like the Pink House, many of the initiatives spurred by recent investments in creative placemaking have been developed by entities from outside the communities they serve. Over time, though, The Pink House has evolved to become largely locally driven and directed. We feel the model that CAT and TIGER graduate Regina Martinez has created with the residents of the Pagedale community has great potential as a stimulus for focused neighborhood cultural development that could be replicated in other St. Louis communities. We also see this approach as a possible jump-start for the kind of cultural synergy identified in the SIAP research described above. (*Also see Appendix C*)

**4.3 There is a small, but robust, live/work housing market in the region:** The most revealing question concerning the interest in, and market for, live/work housing asked artists to indicate their level of agreement with the following statement: “I am very interested in housing where I can both live and do my art making.” A total of 1,572 artists answered this question. Of these, 29.2% (775 respondents) either strongly agreed or agreed with the statement, with 44% (341) of this total reporting household incomes of \$25K–\$125K. By our estimates, 32% of these interested artists likely have incomes above \$40K, which we see as the lower threshold of affordability for subsidized live/workspace. Given this, we believe that 250 respondents, or 10% of the cohort, represents the potential market for live/work space identified by the survey. This market could be even stronger in the stronger in south city neighborhoods that have both high concentration of artists and affordable housing.

While this data is imprecise, this level of interest leads us to recommend moving forward in discussions with developers and follow-up research to explore the potential live/work market and the feasibility of expanding these opportunities for the region’s artists.

## 5. Program Design and Implementation

**5.1 Develop new artist support efforts, in stages, over time:** We would be remiss if we did not point out that some artist support efforts in other jurisdictions have fallen short of their intended goals due to a lack of adequate funding and overambitious planning. With this in mind, we would encourage the Commission to develop a pilot artist support program in stages, over time. The artist award and support elements described here should be developed deliberately, with the assumption that they will be re-examined and re-designed as feedback from the field becomes available.

**5.2 Educate funders and the community about the artist ecosystem:** This study was initiated, in part, because the complex web of interdependent relationships and resources upon which artists depend is not particularly well understood. We recommend using this research and the Commission's artist support initiative to increase awareness about the complexity, diversity, and resourcefulness of the region's artist community. The variety and range of creative relationships, processes, and products that make up the field should be highlighted through publications, reports, and presentations about the program. Both the data gathered through this study and the program's evaluation should also be used to show how much the region's cultural sector is affected by the health of its artist community. This increased awareness among funders and policy makers should help to improve the creativity and efficiency of the artist support system.

**5.3 Continuing research:** We recommend a reprise of the Artists Count research every three to four years. With the current study operating as a baseline, a periodic survey will give the Commission a reliable tool for discerning the health of the artist ecosystem. A recurring study will also serve to symbolize the Commission's commitment to artists as an essential community resource.

As is often the case, this research has posed as many new questions as it has answered.

Additional questions to explore include:

- Are there other ways of working for artists that could be more sustainable?
- What skills do artists need to thrive in the creative economy?
- Does the changing nature of local and global economies present new opportunities for the development of a sustainable cultural economy?
- How can technological innovation best serve artists?
- What can we learn from artists who do have sustainable work lives?
- What other professions and/or industries offer models or ideas that can be adapted by the cultural sector?
- What emerging business models might have beneficial application to art making and presenting?
- Are there more diverse and nuanced ways of considering artists' roles (e.g., artists as creative provocateurs, problem solvers, service providers, small-business owners, consultants, or economic and social stimulants)?

- Are there predictable aspects of artists' careers that determine their economic viability?

**5.4 Establish a periodic “state of the artist” report:** We encourage the Commission to consider issuing a regular “state of the artist” report in conjunction with its continuing research. A well-publicized spotlight of this kind could help establish the region’s artist ecosystem as a generative creative force in the community. The development of a public celebration of the report’s unveiling could also be an opportunity to honor exemplary artist-serving initiatives and/or leadership in the community.

**Final Comment:** As we have explored and documented the St. Louis artist ecology over the last 10 months, we have been impressed by the quality of the programs and services the Commission provides to the region. The depth of understanding, commitment, and creativity driving these programs is exemplary. Fulfilling the creative potential of the area’s artist community will surely demand this kind of thorough approach. And given our experience with this study, we have no doubt that the Commission will continue its thoughtful leadership in support of the region’s artists.

## Part Four: *Appendixes*

## Appendix A: Organizational Indicators for Developing Healthy Artist Ecosystems

Program Outcomes	Indicators for Arts Organizations (Internal)	Indicators for Arts Organizations (External)
<b>Artists sustain themselves through their creative work.</b>	<p>Presenting</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of presentations w/ ST. LOUIS artists</li> <li>• # of presentations exploring ST. LOUIS &amp; local stories and issues</li> <li>• Promotion of local artists</li> </ul> <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of artists employed as artists (full/part)</li> <li>• # of artists employed as arts administrators (full/part)</li> <li>• Average length of employment for artists</li> </ul> <p>Training/Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development provided to artists</li> <li>• Information regarding grants, training opportunities widely available to staff</li> <li>• Communities of practice developed with other organizations</li> </ul> <p>Other</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Concern and involvement w/ the provision of adequate healthcare for artists</li> <li>• Concern and involvement w/ the provision of affordable housing for staff and artistic personnel</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of artist-run organizations</li> <li>• % of artists working full-time in a non-arts capacity (negative)</li> <li>• # and quality of artist fellowship opportunities</li> <li>• Opportunities for artistic programming outside of traditional cultural milieu</li> </ul>
<b>Stronger and more capable arts organizations</b>	<p>Management</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Well managed and adequately capitalized</li> <li>• Low staff turnover/transition</li> <li>• Strong governance with artist representation</li> <li>• Strategic, flexible, and adaptive planning culture</li> </ul>	<p>Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Predictable and regular support for arts organizations</li> <li>• Dedicated public revenue stream for arts and culture</li> <li>• Private sector support for cultural sector that is</li> </ul>



	<p>and practice</p> <p>Personnel</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Quality of artists, org. leadership, and support staff</li> <li>• Stability of leadership and critical personnel</li> <li>• Availability of needed outside technical and administrative support</li> <li>• Participation in communities of practice groups</li> </ul>	<p>robust and coordinated among funders.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High percentage of cultural investments is for general operating support</li> </ul> <p>Arts Community</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High degree of public/private arts sector cooperation</li> <li>• Significant cooperation between large and small arts organizations</li> <li>• Availability and control of venues by artists and arts organizations</li> <li>• Coordinated community-wide and/or discipline-based arts marketing</li> <li>• Access to affordable capacity-building expertise for arts organizations in such areas as finance, planning, business management, marketing, social networking, technology, personnel management, legal issues, arts-based community development</li> <li>•</li> </ul> <p>Training/Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development opportunities are relevant and accessible</li> <li>• Information regarding training opportunities widely available</li> <li>• Workshops/seminars in important non-arts skills available</li> <li>• Discipline-specific arts service organizations provide training and learning networks</li> <li>• Peer training, online courses available</li> <li>• Recurring opportunities/venues for organizations to learn, share, and exchange</li> </ul> <p>Materials/Equipment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Availability of loans or discounts for equipment</li> <li>• Cooperative equipment purchase/use</li> <li>• % of organizations that say they have adequate</li> </ul>
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		supplies of materials/equipment
<b>Increased opportunities for artists to develop and share their work</b>	<p>Demand/Markets:</p> <p>Arts Activity (sales, performances, exhibits, etc.)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of presentations w/ local artists</li> <li>• Promotion of local artists and their work</li> <li>• # of presentations featuring local stories and issues</li> <li>• Level of cooperation with other local arts organizations</li> <li>• Availability and control of venues</li> <li>• Coordinated community-wide and/or discipline-based arts marketing</li> </ul> <p>Material Supports:</p> <p>Employment</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of local artists employed by this org. (full/part)</li> <li>• Average length of employment</li> </ul> <p>Award/Grants</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active dissemination of information about artist employment and grant opportunities</li> <li>• Sponsorship of individual artists' initiatives by organization</li> </ul> <p>Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organization has appropriate space to do work</li> <li>• Organization owns or is working toward owning facilities</li> <li>• Affordable studio/rehearsal space available to affiliated artists and/or others</li> </ul> <p>Networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Recurring opportunities for artists to learn, share, and exchange</li> </ul>	<p>Support</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence and strength of organizations providing fellowship awards for artists</li> <li>• Degree to which award structure is perceived to be biased against certain kinds of art</li> <li>• Ratio of available awards to applicants</li> <li>• Diversity of funding opportunities (quick, multi-year, low-/no-interest loans, etc.)</li> <li>• Public revenue stream devoted to individual artist support (TO tax, sales tax)</li> <li>• Prevalence of technical assistance for artist applicants</li> <li>• Fiscal sponsorships widely available for artist-led creative initiatives</li> </ul> <p>Space</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of arts organizations that own their facilities</li> <li>• % of organizations that have appropriate space to do their work</li> <li>• Availability and proximity of affordable housing for artists</li> <li>• Availability of affordable studio/rehearsal space</li> <li>• Successful arts-based real estate development in community</li> </ul>
<b>More art of high</b>		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding for individual artists provides</li> </ul>

<p><b>quality is developed &amp; shared in more places in the region.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Artistic collaborations in and outside of principal discipline</li> <li>• Stable artistic leadership</li> <li>• Active in arts education</li> <li>• Programming is portable and adaptive to accommodate a variety of venues</li> <li>• Online presence</li> </ul> <p>Training/Professional Development:</p> <p>Sources</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Professional development available to artists and administrative staff</li> <li>• Information regarding training opportunities widely available</li> <li>• Workshops/seminars in important non-arts skills available</li> <li>• Peer training, online courses available</li> </ul>	<p>unencumbered support for artistic development and growth</p> <p>Training/Professional Development</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• High-level arts training &amp; education widely available to children, youth, and adults</li> <li>• Discipline-specific arts service organizations provide training and learning networks, communities of practice</li> <li>• Regular documentation of professional and non-arts training needs of artists</li> <li>• Grants for professional development/travel/study available</li> </ul>
<p><b>More citizens &amp; communities participate in the arts</b></p>	<p>Access</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presenting in community venues and other nontraditional spaces</li> <li>• Proximity to other cultural amenities</li> <li>• Understanding and cultivation of local culture and audiences</li> <li>• Sustained partnerships with community institutions (i.e., parks, schools, etc.)</li> </ul> <p>Communities &amp; Networks</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• # of formal and informal partnerships with community groups or associations</li> <li>• Technological access to interaction with arts community members</li> <li>• Organization's participation in community planning/development activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Presence of local arts council, association or guild, or other community-wide cultural coordination</li> <li>• Perception by artists of their "connectivity" vs. isolation</li> <li>• Membership/participation of cultural sector representatives in non-art civic organizations</li> </ul>

<b>Increased appreciation of cultural ecosystem &amp; artist's centrality to it</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Level of awareness and understanding of community cultural ecosystem</li> <li>• Active participation in efforts to strengthen the community cultural ecosystem</li> </ul>	<p>Information and Research about Artists and Their Work</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Agencies and foundations carry out research on the structure and dynamics of relevant cultural ecosystems</li> <li>• Prevalence of coherent and comprehensive cultural data collection</li> <li>• Theory and research documenting the overall ecology of the cultural sector includes reference to individual artists and organizations that provide direct support to artists</li> <li>• Theory and research link community and leadership development to cultural development</li> </ul>
<b>Increased support for artists &amp; arts organizations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Involvement in arts education</li> <li>• Active participation in cultural advocacy efforts</li> <li>• Collaboration with local community organizations and networks</li> </ul>	<p>Validation:</p> <p>Societal Validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community leaders aware of and demonstrate support for local/area arts orgs.</li> <li>• # of events and attendees at venues featuring local/area artists</li> <li>• Cultural sector participation in civic decision making</li> <li>• Informed media coverage and reviews</li> <li>• Community-wide awards program recognizing top arts events, productions, etc. (e.g., local Tony Awards)</li> </ul> <p>Peer Validation</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Opportunities for informed reviews and critical response by peers for artists' work</li> <li>• Mutual support network for arts organizations</li> <li>• Peer panel process for artists grants</li> <li>• Training/professional development</li> </ul>

<p><b>The arts are more integrated into community life.</b></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Active community partner</li> <li>• Active with local business community</li> <li>• Board includes leaders from other community sectors</li> <li>• Participation in community leadership development</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Forums and support for cross-sector collaboration</li> <li>• Cross sector partnership for audience development (e.g., chamber of commerce, tourism link)</li> <li>• # of opportunities for collaboration w/ other sectors (e.g., social service, community dev. environmental civic engagement programs)</li> <li>• Prevalence of cross-sector leadership on arts boards</li> <li>• Availability of board leadership training</li> <li>• Artists and arts admin. involved in governance in other sectors</li> <li>• Access to grants/fellowships for community leadership development</li> </ul>
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## Appendix B. Artist's Annual Personal Income by Discipline (St. Louis City & County)

Income Levels	Music	Dance	Visual Arts	Theater	Literary Arts	Media Arts	Interdisciplinary Arts	Architecture	Design	Community Arts
<b>Less than \$10K</b>	15.6% (56)	25.3% (19)	19.9% (158)	15.6% (19)	12.7% (15)	18.2% (20)	11.4% (4)	7.1% (1)	11.5% (17)	15.9% (7)
<b>\$10K-\$25K</b>	20.6% (74)	40.0% (30)	26.5% (210)	22.1% (27)	28.0% (33)	20.0% (22)	28.6% (10)	14.3% (2)	18.2% (27)	22.7% (10)
<b>\$25K-\$50K</b>	30.8% (111)	22.7% (17)	26.0% (206)	33.6% (41)	29.7% (35)	28.2% (31)	25.7% (9)	35.7% (5)	31.8% (47)	43.2% (19)
<b>\$50K-\$75K</b>	14.4% (52)	1.3% (1)	9.7% (77)	13.1% (16)	11.9% (14)	17.3% (19)	14.3% (5)	7.1% (1)	11.5% (17)	4.5% (2)
<b>\$75K-\$100K</b>	8.3% (30)	2.7% (2)	4.2% (33)	6.6% (8)	6.8% (8)	3.6% (4)	0.0% (0)	14.3% (2)	10.8% (16)	2.3% (1)
<b>\$100K-\$125K</b>	2.2% (8)	2.7% (2)	1.3% (10)	0.8% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.7% (3)	2.9% (1)	14.3% (2)	1.4% (2)	2.3% (1)
<b>\$125K+</b>	1.4% (5)	1.3% (1)	0.8% (6)	3.3% (4)	2.5% (3)	1.8% (2)	2.9% (1)	0.0% (0)	2.0% (3)	0.0% (0)
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	6.7% (24)	4.0% (3)	11.6% (92)	4.9% (6)	8.5% (10)	8.2% (9)	14.3% (5)	7.1% (1)	12.8% (19)	9.1% (4)

## Artist's Annual Household Income by Discipline (St. Louis City & County)

Income Levels	Music	Dance	Visual Art	Theater	Literary Arts	Media Arts	Interdisciplinary Arts	Architecture	Design	Community Arts
<b>Less than \$10K</b>	6.1% (20)	12.7% (9)	6.0% (43)	8.6% (10)	3.7% (4)	7.0% (7)	0.0% (0)	0.0% (0)	3.9% (5)	7.5% (3)
<b>\$10K-\$25K</b>	12.5% (41)	16.9% (12)	15.0% (108)	12.1% (14)	18.7% (20)	7.0% (7)	15.6% (5)	0.0% (0)	9.4% (12)	12.5% (5)
<b>\$25K-\$50K</b>	23.2% (76)	21.1% (15)	19.7% (142)	15.5% (18)	19.6% (21)	28.0% (28)	25.0% (8)	15.4% (2)	23.4% (30)	30.0% (12)
<b>\$50K-\$75K</b>	15.2% (50)	11.3% (8)	18.5% (133)	21.6% (25)	11.2% (12)	15.0% (15)	18.8% (6)	15.4% (2)	14.8% (19)	20.0% (8)
<b>\$75K-\$100K</b>	15.5% (51)	12.7% (9)	13.2% (95)	12.9% (15)	19.6% (21)	17.0% (17)	9.4% (3)	23.1% (3)	15.6% (20)	7.5% (3)
<b>\$100K-\$125K</b>	9.1% (30)	5.6% (4)	5.7% (41)	8.6% (10)	9.3% (10)	10.0% (10)	6.3% (2)	7.7% (1)	10.2% (13)	5.0% (2)
<b>\$125K+</b>	7.3% (24)	9.9% (7)	5.3% (38)	9.5% (11)	4.7% (5)	7.0% (7)	6.3% (2)	30.8% (4)	7.0% (9)	5.0% (2)
<b>Prefer not to say</b>	11.0% (36)	9.9% (7)	16.6% (119)	11.2% (13)	13.1% (14)	9.0% (9)	18.8% (6)	7.7% (1)	15.6% (20)	12.5% (5)

**Appendix C:** “Cultivating Natural Cultural Districts,” Susan Seifert and Mark Stern, from the University of Pennsylvania’s Social Impact of the Arts Project. (*Next page*)



# Cultivating “Natural” Cultural Districts

Mark J. Stern and Susan C. Seifert

*Can the arts and culture play a central role in revitalizing American cities? Over the past decade, a number of cities have answered this question affirmatively. For the most part, they have turned to big-ticket downtown cultural districts as the strategy to expand their “creative economy.” At the same time, skeptics like Joel Kotkin have ridiculed this approach as the creation of “the ephemeral city” that ignores the fundamentals of good city-building for the illusion of urban vitality.*

There is another way to use culture to rebuild cities, not by placing a shiny veneer over crumbling decay, but by using culture to revitalize the urban grass-roots, its neighborhoods, and their residents’ civic engagement. This report uses existing research on urban culture and community arts to make a case for culture-based revitalization.

Culture is the right tool for urban revival because it flourishes in the new urban reality of the 21st century. The arts are no longer just about going to the symphony, the ballet, or a Broadway musical. They are more active, more accessible, and more polyglot. Artists have become social entrepreneurs, selling their wares as well as their vision. They draw on the variety of the world’s traditions as well as the distinctive and diverse rhythms of the contemporary city.

While the arts *are* commerce, they revitalize cities not through their bottom-line but through their social role. The arts build ties that bind—neighbor-to-neighbor and community-to-community. It is these social networks that translate cultural vitality into economic dynamism.

Culture generates many types of social networks. When artists work with eight or nine different organizations during the year—as many do, they build networks. When a community arts center partners with a boys’ and girls’ club or an after-school program, it builds networks. When community residents are involved in arts programs as well as churches, civic associations, and book clubs, they build networks. When a community development organization reaches out simultaneously to downtown financial institutions and local residents, it builds a network.

In this report we focus on one particular kind of network—the geographically-defined networks created by the presence of a density of cultural assets in particular neighborhoods. We call these “natural” cultural districts, a term that is both descriptive and analytical. Descriptively, a “natural” cultural district simply identifies a neighborhood that has spawned a density of assets—organizations, businesses, participants, and artists—that sets it apart from other neighborhoods. Analytically, these districts are of interest because of density’s side-effects. Economic developers note that clusters encourage innovation and creativity—a spur to *cultural production*. At the same time, a cluster of cultural assets often pushes a neighborhood to a regeneration tipping-point, attracting new services and residents.

What is striking about this phenomenon is that it occurs without policy intent. Take Old City in downtown Philadelphia. Today it is a thriving district with galleries and showrooms, restaurants, theatres, historic sites, and a growing residential population. It is hard to believe that the seeds to this regeneration were planted three decades ago when a group of artists’ cooperatives were priced out of their previous locations on South Street. Today, the local business-improvement district caters to its needs, but Old City has grown with virtually no city or state or philanthropic aid.

Although residents of every urban neighborhood deserve access to and opportunities for cultural expression, natural cultural districts offer particularly attractive alternatives for broadening and deepening engagement in the arts. First, because these neighborhoods already are sustaining

## Philadelphia's "Natural" Cultural Districts

Natural cultural districts come in all shapes and sizes. Some boast a variety of mainstream cultural venues; others are more edgy. Some evolve quickly; others take a while to come into focus. Some are based in well-off, stable neighborhoods; while others represent the regeneration of neighborhoods that have fallen on hard times.

Three existing districts in Philadelphia—Old City, Norris Square, and 40th Street—provide insight into the diversity of natural cultural districts and the role of artists, land, and institutions in creating, sustaining, and occasionally undermining them.

These arts districts were explored during the 2004 public conversation sponsored by SIAP and the University of Pennsylvania's Urban Studies program. A full account of the program is available at: [www.sp2.upenn.edu/SIAP/DOChome.htm](http://www.sp2.upenn.edu/SIAP/DOChome.htm)

### Old City, Center City, Philadelphia

Old City, located in the northeast corner of Center City near the Delaware Riverfront, is the site of many of Philadelphia's historic resources associated with early settlement. Once a thriving industrial and wholesale district, Old City began to decline in the decades after World War II as industry moved out of the city center. Numerous industrial and commercial loft buildings were left vacant or underused. In the 1970s and early 1980s, artists and entrepreneurs attracted by cheap rents and large spaces began moving into the area.

By the 1980s, developers in Old City had begun to convert lofts into apartments for rent or sale and, in addition to studios and galleries, the area had attracted a mix of offices, wholesalers, shops, bars and restaurants. The 1990s saw even more growth and investment, with recent residential, retail, and restaurant development catering to affluent markets. As rents and property values rose, many pioneer artists and entrepreneurs were forced to move out of Old City. Unlike the SoHo story in New York, however, the option of buying and staying was open to modest organizations like the Painted Bride Art Center.

### Norris Square, North Philadelphia

The roots of Norris Square Neighborhood Project (NSNP) date from 1973 when a fifth grade teacher, Natalie Kempner, started a mini nature museum in the basement of Miller School. Her students' efforts at greening over the next years were supported by a neighborhood coalition called S.O.S. (Save Our Square) and by Sister Carol Keck, principal of St. Boniface School who in 1988 became NSNP executive director.

Iris Brown and Tomasita Romero—long time Norris Square teachers and gardeners—were instrumental in connecting NSNP with the Philadelphia Green program of the Pennsylvania Horticultural Society and the City of Philadelphia's Mural Arts Program (then the Anti-Graffiti Network). Iris tells the story of how the women of Norris Square tapped their Puerto Rican culture and traditions to reclaim Norris Square Park for the community. Grupo Motivos—a group of motivated women—continue to develop a series of gardens that combine murals, horticulture, and cultural education that benefit the entire population of Norris Square.

### 40th Street, West Philadelphia

The 40th Street district in University City centers on 40th from Chestnut to Locust Streets. This corridor has long been home to a mix of retail and eating establishments that serve the University of Pennsylvania and adjacent neighborhoods of West Philadelphia. Recent cultural spaces—a new cinema, a renovated public library, artist-in-residence studios, and the Rotunda—have joined the mix and helped anchor an emerging arts district.

The Rotunda began in 1996 as a project of Penn student Andrew Zitcer. Originally the First Church of Christ Scientist, the edifice had sat vacant when Penn bought it. With the support of the university, Andrew and his collaborators started a group called The Foundation and opened the Rotunda to community arts initiatives and artists. The Foundation sees the Rotunda as a cultural meeting ground, a place where many different genres are represented—a 21st century community center. The Rotunda functions as an "inter-zone," a commons. Andrew sees himself as a "keshet," which in Hebrew means "connection," "liaison," or "one who makes connections."

vital cultural scenes, they present opportunities for time-limited, strategic interventions to expand their effectiveness. Second, because they typically have a significant share of commercial cultural firms, they provide possibilities for profitable investment. Finally, because they are already established, they have the ability to generate significant spillover effects on less dynamic sections of the city. In short, they offer the best balance of costs and potential benefits.

Natural cultural districts present a challenge to those interested in neighborhood revitalization. What can policy-makers do to encourage these clusters without snuffing out the spark that makes them distinctive? Because natural cultural districts are not planned from scratch but rely instead on the self-organized efforts of local players, they require tender-care and a light hand. Natural cultural districts must be *cultivated*. To do so successfully, we must first gain a better understanding of the ecology of these districts and how they fit into the contemporary urban arts scene.

### A Broad Conception of Culture

Recent research confirms casual observation: we are engaging the arts in new ways and different settings. Where cultural participation used to be defined by attendance at formal events, it is now more active and less formal. The heightened sense of design has integrated art more intimately into everyday life—from kitchen appliances to websites. Americans have increasingly become “omnivores”; they enjoy classical music *and* reggae, ballet *and* break-dancing. They also seek more *active* ways of engaging culture. They enjoy exhibits, but they want to be engaged in the experience as well. Twenty years ago, poetry was a cerebral field that conjured images of solemn loners; today “spoken word” is a performance, and sometimes competitive, art form.

The new realities of cultural expression have challenged our notions about participation and institutions. An Urban Institute study suggests that if we ask about a wider range of activities, cultural participation rates would be 20 percent higher than those found in typical surveys. A study of two low-income neighborhoods in Philadelphia discovered that informal social settings—dance parties, nightclubs, and family gatherings—were the most common venues for creative engagement.

For decades, we have equated the arts and culture with nonprofit organizations. Indeed, much cultural policy over the past generation has assumed that the

health of the arts is the same as the health of these established groups. A spate of recent research has expanded our understanding of the institutional realities of the cultural world. Commercial culture is certainly a visible phenomenon, especially in fields like music and Broadway productions, but we are only beginning to understand how deeply commercial culture has penetrated America’s communities. A preliminary analysis of metropolitan Philadelphia turned up four times as many commercial cultural firms—ranging from music stores to arts and crafts galleries to dance schools—as nonprofit cultural providers.

Equally important, an “informal” arts sector—largely participatory and unincorporated—is now gaining prominence. The sector is so diverse that it may really be several sectors with one label. It includes street musicians, amateur choirs, theater groups, and emerging organizations. Studies in Chicago and Silicon Valley, in particular, have demonstrated the sector’s importance, especially to new immigrant communities that encounter institutional barriers to involvement with mainstream culture. The informal sector also highlights the importance of artists in creating venues, performances, and cultural opportunities. Indeed, artists have become *social entrepreneurs*, creating opportunities for their communities as they seek to earn a living.

Scholars and policy-makers are trying to make sense of this increasingly diverse and complicated arts world. Some have proposed that we see all of these players as part of a *creative sector* that crosses a variety of institutional boundaries. If we add the newly fuzzy barrier between cultural producers and consumers, it might make sense to think of the sector as an *ecosystem* in which different parts are self-organizing and interdependent.

### Social Diversity and Cultural Engagement Feed One Another

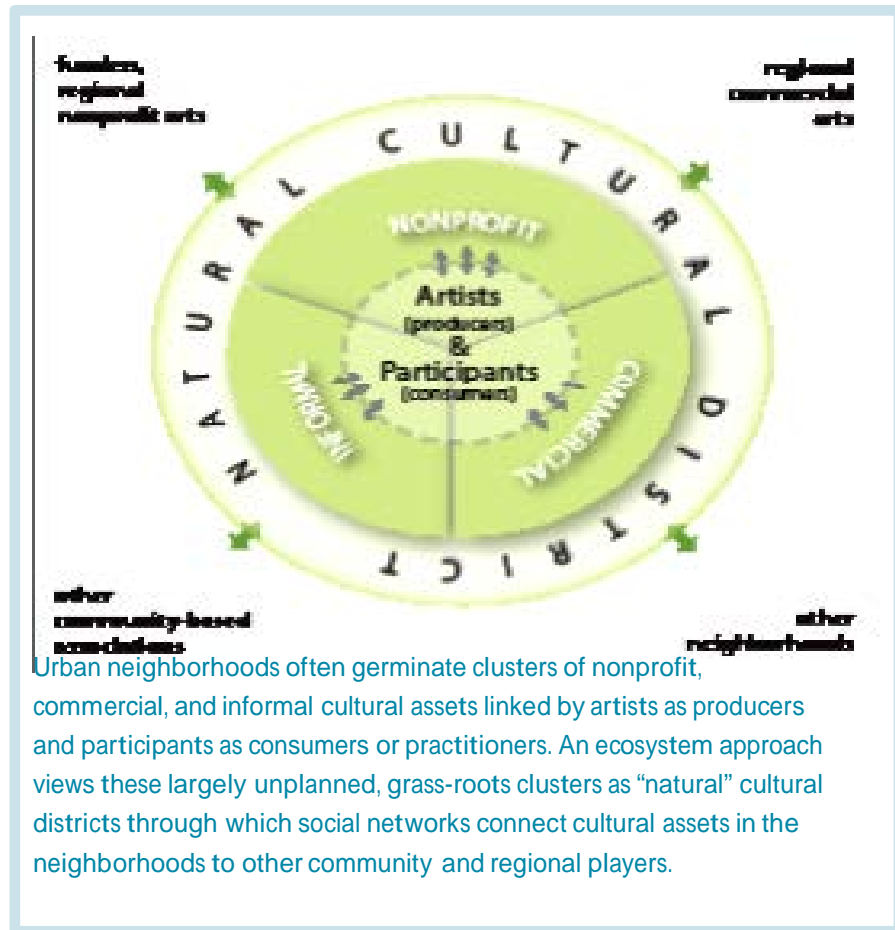
Diverse communities are the fertile soil in which the arts and culture flourish. Studies of cities across the country have demonstrated that communities with striking differences based on social class, ethnicity, and household structure are consistently more likely to have high cultural participation, house many cultural groups, and provide studios and shelter for artists.

Research in Philadelphia, San Francisco, Atlanta, and Chicago has documented the range and depth of the connection between social diversity and the arts.

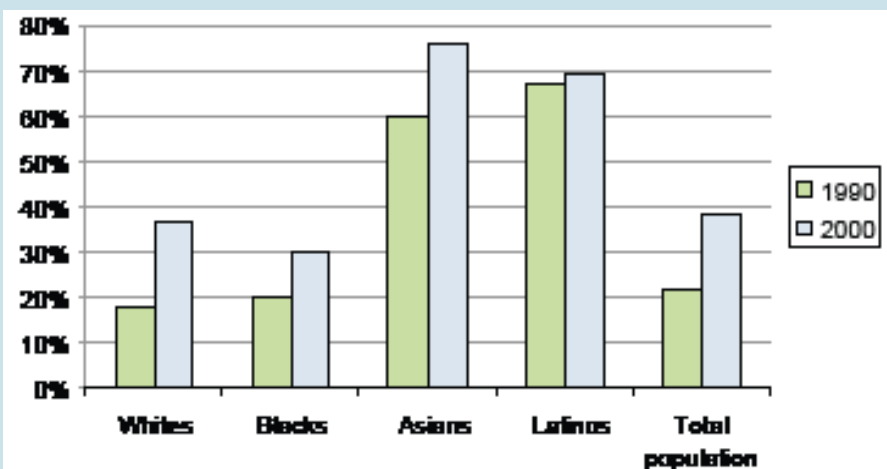
Ethnically diverse neighborhoods (those in which no more than 80 percent of the residents are members of a single ethnic group) as well as economically and domestically diverse neighborhoods are more likely than homogenous areas to be associated with cultural engagement. *Pov-prof* communities (those with a higher than average rate of *poverty* and *professional* workers) and neighborhoods with what the Census Bureau calls “nonfamily households” (including unrelated roommates and gay and heterosexual couples) are associated with high levels of cultural resources and participation. What is more, it is communities with two or three types of diversity that have the highest density of cultural assets.

The connection between diversity and the arts still needs to be better understood. Diverse neighborhoods seem to have a level of energy and vitality that is conducive to creativity. Sometimes cultural expression is a product of cooperation—as communities seek to develop multi-cultural institutions that bridge community differences. Other times, the high levels of cultural engagement may be a product of competition, as each group within a neighborhood seeks to create its own cultural identity.

Whatever the cause, the culture-diversity connection is good news for the arts because America is experiencing an explosion in diversity. Fueled by the current wave of immigrants, our communities are more ethnically diverse than they have ever been. In Philadelphia, for example, the number of residents living in an ethnically diverse block group nearly doubled during the 1990s. Changes in the life-course—especially the delay of marriage—have increased the number of young adults living in non-family households. Where a generation ago only a handful of neighborhoods had a high concentration of non-family households, today they are a common sight. As diversity spreads, the number of neighborhoods that care about culture increases.



Percent of population living in ethnically diverse block groups, by ethnicity, Philadelphia 1990 and 2000



During the 1990s the proportion of Philadelphians living in an ethnically diverse block group nearly doubled. Source: US Census



## Many Indicators, Same Geography

What do we mean by “cultural engagement”? SIAP has focused on four indicators of the intensity of the cultural scene in a neighborhood:

- cultural participants;
- nonprofit cultural providers, including unincorporated associations;
- commercial cultural firms, and independent artists.

SIAP has developed ways of measuring each of these indicators for every neighborhood in the Philadelphia metropolitan area. While there are differences in their patterns, there are striking similarities in their distribution. Taken together, we call these features an area’s *cultural assets*.

Some sections of metropolitan Philadelphia have significant concentrations of cultural assets. These neighborhoods tend to share three characteristics: diversity, income, and distance from Center City. These neighborhoods are the city’s *natural cultural districts*.

Many cities have sought to create cultural districts, directed primarily at attracting suburbanites, tourists, and conventioners. But most cities already have cultural districts, neighborhood-based cultural clusters that have emerged without planning or massive public investment. What is more—because they are complex ecosystems that combine artistic production and consumption and a mix of institutional forms, disciplines, and sizes—they have a degree of sustainability that a planned cultural district is unlikely to match.

Recognizing the importance of natural cultural districts to the metropolitan arts world turns our understanding of cultural planning and policy on its head. The goal of policy and planning should be to nurture grass-roots districts, remove impediments that prevent them from achieving their potential, and provide the resources they need to flourish. These *self-organized* districts are a gift to the city; we need policies to assure that the city take advantage of them.

## A Consistent Long-Term Relationship to Revitalization

The presence of natural cultural districts is good news for those who care about the health of the

creative sector, but they hold dividends even for those who are not invested in the arts. By combining evidence on a neighborhood’s cultural assets with other types of neighborhood data, SIAP has discovered a strong and durable relationship between cultural engagement, poverty decline, and population growth in Philadelphia.

Keep in mind, Philadelphia is not a high-growth city. Between 1950 and 2000, the city lost 500,000 residents, a trend that has continued into the early 21st century. Poverty rose during the first five years of this decade. By 2005, Philadelphia’s poverty rate stood at 25 percent, significantly above the national average.

Given this background, the ability of culture to stimulate poverty decline and population growth should be big news to city leaders. During the 1980s, block groups with a high number of cultural assets were nearly four times more likely to see their population increase and their poverty rate decline as sections with fewer assets. Again, during the 1990s, the data showed a similar pattern.

If anything, the relationship between culture and revitalization appears to be stronger in recent years. According to data developed by The Reinvestment Fund, the Philadelphia housing market experienced a marked improvement between 2001 and 2003. Using a six-category scale, TRF estimated that 13 percent of block groups improved by more than two categories—for example, from being a *reclamation* block group in 2001 to a *transitional* block group in 2003. This improvement was not distributed evenly; many local housing markets remained flat over the two years. What explained which block groups improved and which did not? The level of cultural assets in a block group correlated very strongly with block group improvement. More than half of the block groups with the highest concentration of cultural assets—our “natural” cultural districts—improved by at least two market categories while less than two percent of the other block groups showed comparable improvement.

The evidence is strong. For the past quarter century, cultural assets and neighborhood revitalization have been linked to one another. What still needs to be explained is why the arts have such a powerful effect. We need to look beyond the “usual suspects”—the direct economic impact of the arts on urban economies. It is the “unusual suspects”—especially the impact of culture on the civic life of urban neighborhoods—that provides the most convincing answer to this puzzle.

## It's Not (Just) the Economy Stupid

A sizable body of empirical research has attempted to demonstrate the direct economic impact of the arts on the urban economy. Yet, in the end, this research has failed to explain how such a modest sector can have such a powerful effect.

The simplest way of calculating the economic impact of the arts is to tally each cultural organization's direct expenditures and then use a "multiplier" to measure its total impact. Yet, such a model is flawed in two ways. First, the formula generates a huge amount of double counting as one organization's direct impact gets counted as another organization's indirect impact. Second, this model ignores "substitution effects" associated with cultural expenditures. Virtually every dollar spent by local residents on culture is a dollar NOT spent on something else. By this definition, then, the only cultural spending that can have an economic impact is the result of *exporting* cultural products elsewhere or *importing* cultural audiences. The 99 percent of cultural activities that have no significant import-export element are simply irrelevant from a strict economic impact framework.

One purpose of the economic impact assessment has been to support public subsidies for urban mega-projects built around performing arts or cultural centers. These studies have often ignored the substitution effect problem, leading to inflated estimates of projects' probable impact. The real-world consequences of these flawed studies is a set of major projects that have required on-going subsidies but have failed to deliver the promised economic boost to cities or regions that might justify these subsidies. Indeed, the exceptional economic impact study that actually considers all of the potential costs and benefits of a proposed development often concludes that the mega-project is not justified on economic grounds.

The failure of economic impact of the arts analyses has led recent research to make more muted claims. The idea of a *creative economy* that spans nonprofit and for-profit firms and activities that range from the arts to architecture and design has generated studies that underline the overall importance of these activities to contemporary urban economies. These studies have added an understanding of the *social dimension of cultural production* to a straight economic analysis. In particular, they have pointed

## Painted Bride Art Center



Philadelphia's Painted Bride Art Center, founded in 1969 as a South Street artists' cooperative, plays "matchmaker between contemporary artists and unique audiences." In 1981 the Bride purchased and moved to its permanent home in Old City at 230 Vine Street, a visual and performing arts center enveloped in a tile mosaic created by Isaiah Zagar.

to the importance of the clustering of creative industries, which facilitates the flow of ideas, personnel, and capital as spurs to innovation and efficiency. A recent report on "creative New York", for example, induced the city's commerce department to establish a desk on nonprofits.

Advocates have often failed to acknowledge the costs associated with investments in the creative economy. Two possible negative consequences of culture-based development are *gentrification* and the *expansion of economic inequality*.

Gentrification is popularly linked to the movement of artists into a previously unfashionable city district. Certainly, there are many cases—especially in "world cities" with red-hot real estate markets—where artists and creative enterprises were among the first entrants into a low-income district that resulted in widespread displacement. However, displacement can occur only when the conditions are "right". First, there are many constraining conditions—the general sluggishness of urban real estate markets, high levels of owner-occupied housing, a stock of vacant or underused industrial structures—that prevent an infusion of artists from

## What is a “Natural” Cultural District?

SIAP defines a natural cultural district as a geographical area in which a variety of cultural assets are clustered. Natural cultural districts are important for two reasons. First, there is some evidence that this type of clustering has a positive impact on cultural production; artists and other cultural entrepreneurs interact, learn, compete, and test out their ideas on one another. Second, there is a strong body of evidence that links these concentrations of cultural activities with positive spill-over effects on the immediate community.

We identified cultural districts in metropolitan Philadelphia by using four data sources: SIAP’s regional inventory of nonprofit cultural resources, a database of commercial cultural firms in the metropolitan area, a listing of artists provided by the Pew Fellowships in the Arts; and SIAP’s small-area estimates of regional cultural participation based on data provided by over 75 cultural organizations. All four of these indicators were calculated for every census block group (approximately 6-8 city blocks) in metropolitan Philadelphia.

Our identification of natural cultural districts occurred in two steps. First, we used a data reduction technique—factor analysis—to create a single scale that captured the variation

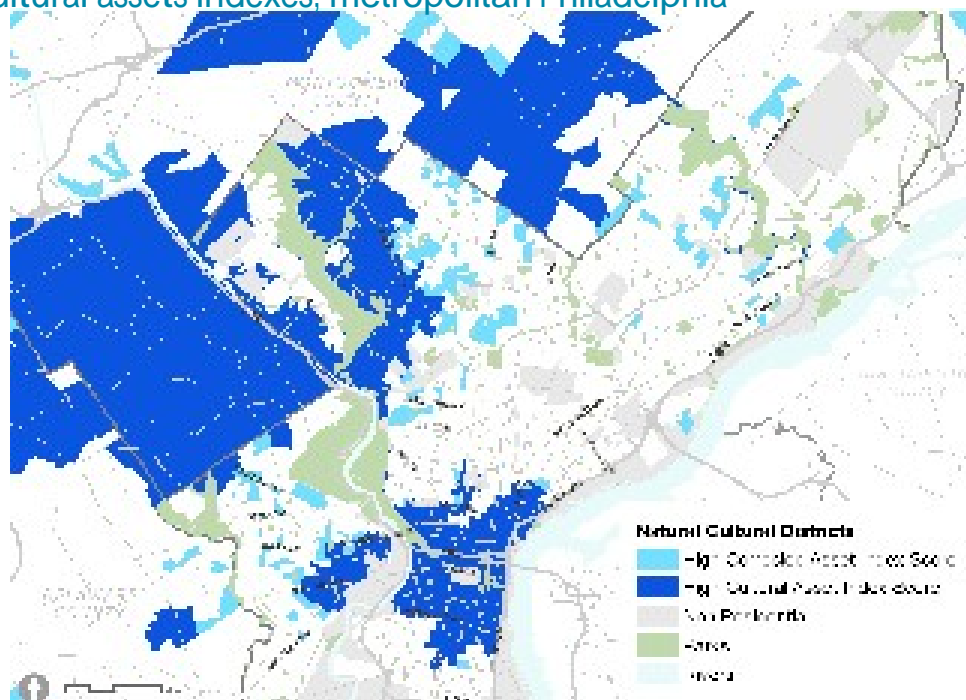
of all four of these indicators across the metropolitan area. The analysis determined that the four indicators had very similar patterns of variation (a single scale accounted for 81 percent of the variation). We refer to this as our cultural assets index. Parts of the region with the highest concentration of cultural assets were the first set of natural cultural districts.

The cultural assets index is limited, however, because it is strongly correlated with socio-economic status, diversity, and distance from Center City. As a result, lower-income neighborhoods farther from downtown were poorly represented on this scale.

The second stage of our analysis identified neighborhoods with a cultural assets index score higher than we would expect when we correct for these three variables. Essentially, these are districts that are “exceeding expectations” in their concentration of cultural assets.

Both the cultural assets index and the corrected index are correlated with the chances that a neighborhood would improve over time, although the main index has a stronger correlation. TRF and SIAP will be tracking these districts over time to examine their implications for neighborhood revitalization.

## Cultural assets indexes, metropolitan Philadelphia



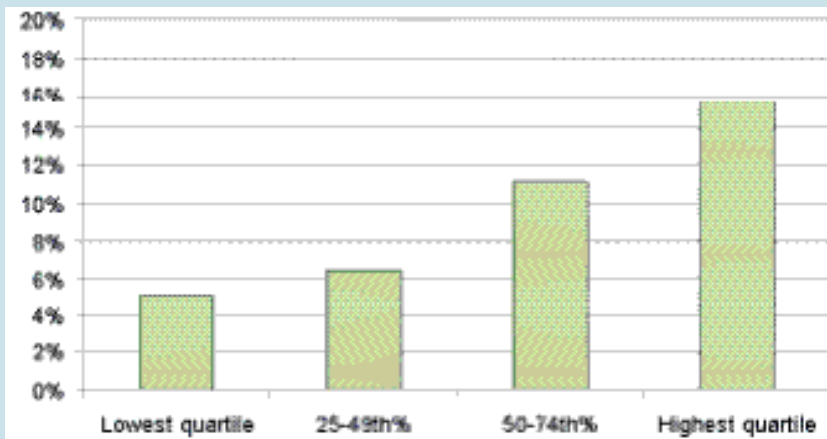
Using four indicators—non-profit cultural providers, commercial cultural firms, artists, and cultural participation—SIAP identified neighborhoods with a concentration of cultural assets. A second index—which corrected for the effects of income, diversity, and distance from Center City—identified lower-income neighborhoods with significantly more cultural assets than expected.

Source: SIAP cultural assets database.





### Percent of block groups that revitalized by presence of nonprofit cultural providers, Philadelphia 1990-2000



Neighborhoods with many cultural providers within one-half mile were nearly four times as likely to see their population increase and poverty rate decline during the 1990s as those with few providers.

Source: US Census, SIAP cultural assets database

translating into displacement. Second, for gentrification to be more than a slogan, the pace of displacement has to be fast enough to destroy the social fabric of a neighborhood.

Clearly, there is no objective measure of when neighborhood improvement—or, in Jane Jacobs’ striking phrase, “unslumming”—becomes gentrification. But if we see neighborhood revitalization as desirable, we cannot afford to label all population change as gentrification.

In Philadelphia—and here the City of Brotherly Love may be more the rule than the exception—the case for arts-based gentrification seems quite weak. The city’s legendary slow real estate market has combined with high owner-occupancy rates to prevent even hot markets from turning over quickly. What we typically find are cultural districts, in which economic revitalization goes on for years or even decades that prevent the social fabric of the neighborhood from disintegrating. Indeed, the most convincing cases for gentrification in Philadelphia have been stimulated not by artists but by city government or large nonprofits, like universities and hospitals, deciding to use their considerable economic and political resources to clear a neighborhood for a future use.

Although gentrification is more frequently noted, expansion of economic inequality is by far the most

common negative economic impact of culture-based strategies. This is especially true for those cities that have followed Richard Florida’s advocacy of building a local “creative class”. Florida argues that a cool urban scene—with a diverse mix of culture, recreation, and “plug and play” opportunities—is a key to attracting “creative people”, the critical ingredient for a city’s economic vitality.

Yet, this prescription for urban revitalization has a number of negative by-products. We know, for example, that artists are part of the “winner-take-all” economy—a few “winners” in dance, music, and the visual arts receive a disproportionate share of the benefits. This explains why artists have a much higher level of economic inequality than most professions. The proliferation of the informal arts sector—although it generates many benefits—is one symptom of the expanding inequality within the creative sector.

From a slightly broader perspective, Florida’s creative class works in sectors of the urban economy characterized by many high-skilled, high-wage jobs and many low-skilled, low-wage jobs with virtually no ladders connecting the two parts. As a result, the growth of the creative class is associated with the acceleration of trends toward economic inequality, a tendency belatedly recognized by Florida:

Rising inequality is driven by the dynamics of the emerging creative system and does not promise to be self-healing. On the contrary, these dynamics perversely threaten to make the situation worse.

Culture-based revitalization must hit a narrow target. It must stimulate economic vitality and promote opportunity without generating displacement or expanding inequality. Unfortunately, the most common forms of culture-based revitalization appear to create the worst of both worlds. If we are to believe the research, culture-based mega-projects only occasionally are economic successes; most require high, on-going subsidies and effectively feed contemporary cities’ growth of economic inequality.

## Natural Cultural Districts and Neighborhood Revitalization

SIAP defines a natural cultural district as a geographical area in which a variety of cultural assets are clustered. Natural cultural districts are important for two reasons. First, there is some evidence that this type of clustering has a positive impact on cultural production; artists and other cultural entrepreneurs interact, learn, compete, and test out their ideas on one another. Second, there is a strong body of evidence that links these concentrations of cultural activities with positive spill-over effects on the immediate community.

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To develop MVA, TRF uses a statistical technique known as cluster analysis. Cluster analysis helps uncover patterns in data by forming groups of areas that are similar along a set of selected values that describe those areas. While the clusters are formed to be as uniform as possible within, they are also as dissimilar as possible from one another. Using this technique, the MVA is able to reduce vast amounts of data on hundreds of thousands of properties and hundreds of areas down to a manageable, meaningful typology of market types. The core MVA includes six categories ranging from “regional

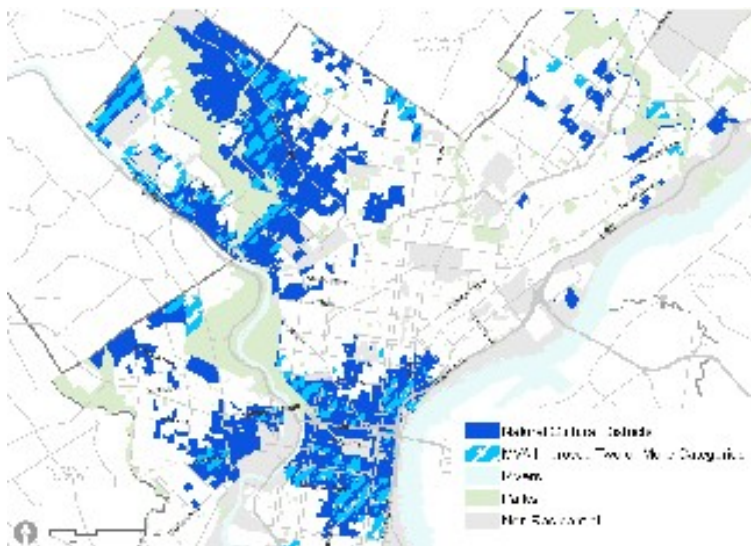
choice” neighborhoods that are among the region's most desirable housing markets to “reclamation” neighborhoods that face sizable hurdles to revitalization.

TRF conducted market value analysis of Philadelphia in both 2001 and 2003. The analysis showed a rapid improvement in the city's housing market over that two-year period. Nearly half of the block groups in the city improved during the two year period while 13 percent improved by more than two categories—for example, by moving from “reclamation” to “transitional” or “distressed” to “steady.” These are neighborhoods that enjoyed a significant turn-around in their market viability.

In order to test the role of cultural assets in neighborhood revitalization, we combined SIAP's cultural assets index with TRF's data on neighborhood change. The results were striking. Eighty-three percent (83%) of all block groups that improved by two or more MVA categories between 2001 and 2003 were natural cultural districts. Among block groups that were no better than “steady” in 2001, 60 percent of natural cultural districts saw their MVA score improve by at least two categories.

It will take further analysis to confirm a causal relationship between cultural assets and neighborhood revitalization. However, the strength of the correlation suggests that the connection is not accidental. The data strongly suggest that natural cultural districts build both collective efficacy within neighborhoods and bridges among different social classes and ethnic groups.

## Housing market improvement, 2001-2003, and cultural assets



Eighty-three percent of all block groups that improved by two or more MVA categories between 2001 and 2003 were natural cultural districts.

Source: TRF market value analysis, SIAP cultural assets database

Cultivating natural cultural districts provides one avenue for using culture to revitalize cities without building higher walls between classes. These districts can stimulate the productivity of the creative sector by encouraging innovation and attracting investment.

Here, the experience of public authorities like Creative London is instructive. Creative London has pursued a mission of using culture to stimulate economic growth in the city while expanding social inclusion. As Ken Livingstone, London's mayor, has noted:

London's creative industries are clearly doing well and the future looks very promising. Research suggests that growth rates of 4.5 per cent are sustainable in the medium term, particularly in sectors like digital content, music, design and fashion. So, by the time the Olympics come to London in 2012, we could be talking about a £30bn plus business – a business that's bigger than the city's financial sector.

But besides the sums, the creative industries also provide ideal opportunities to achieve social inclusion in the capital – challenging existing economic and social barriers, promoting diverse workforces, engaging with disadvantaged communities and allowing individuals to use talent and innovation alone to shine.

The conflict between downtown and neighborhood development is a false choice. The link between business success and social inclusion is not simple philanthropy. Diversity breeds creativity. It is the success of the creative sector in crossing boundaries and overcoming historical patterns of social exclusion that provides its vitality. Inevitably, the search for economic success for the creative sector must pass through social engagement.

### Building Communities, Building Bridges

Their social impact on neighborhoods is the arts' critical link to economic revitalization. Empirical research suggests that culture—like other forms of civic engagement—strengthens relationships among local neighborhood members as well as their determination to be involved in community life. At the same time, because of the participation patterns it generates; culture, more than many activities, fosters connections across neighborhoods and social groups. This dual role—strengthening communities and building bridges between them—best explains culture's effectiveness.

### Taller Puertorriqueno



Taller Puertorriqueno, a workshop and classroom that is “the cultural heart of the barrio,” also draws people from throughout the Philadelphia region to its gallery, bookstore, performances, symposia, and festivals.

“El Corazon Cultural del Barrio,” North 5th Street & Lehigh Avenue, North Philadelphia  
Source: [www.tallerpr.org](http://www.tallerpr.org)

### Norris Square Neighborhood Project



“Butterflies of the Caribbean,” West Susquehanna Avenue, North Philadelphia Source: <http://nsnp.com/batey.html>.

The Mural Arts Program with Norris Square Neighborhood Project, commissioned Cuban artist Salvador Gonzales to create a mosaic in El Batey garden, a colorful “place of retreat” for local residents.



Community-based programs, informal groups, and participatory practices are particularly generative with respect to community building and bridging. A study of the informal arts sector in Chicago concluded that:

Informal arts practice helps build individual and community assets by fostering social inclinations and skills critical to civic renewal, including tolerance, trust and consensus building; collaborative work habits; innovative problem-solving; and the capacity to imagine change and willingness to work for it.

Another Chicago study of small-budget arts organizations, using interviews and focus groups, found that these small groups “create new networks, supplement and improve upon existing networks, and assist in problem-solving efforts within urban residential neighborhoods.” Yet another Chicago study found a link between community participation and what it termed “collective efficacy”—that is, the belief among local residents that they can make a difference in their neighborhood and the willingness on their part to do so.

Yet, the impact of culture on strengthening ties within communities is usually complemented by its ability to overcome barriers of geography, social class, and ethnicity. A study of immigrant arts in California found that participatory cultural activities could achieve a bridging function by first creating bonds within each group. Using quantitative data in a Philadelphia study, SIAP discovered the behavioral foundation of the arts’ effectiveness at bridging social divides: 80 percent of community arts participants came from outside of the neighborhood in which the program was held.

This bridging function of cultural engagement is particularly important in explaining the art’s capacity to spur neighborhood revitalization. Natural cultural districts—even when they are found in relatively poor neighborhoods—attract a diverse set of participants. Cultural engagement makes urban places into destinations, putting them “on the map” for individuals and communities who otherwise might remain largely ignorant of their existence. These connections, once established, become conduits for other commercial and philanthropic resources.

Although we currently lack comparable data on other forms of community engagement, the evidence

suggests that cultural participation generates a unique set of social networks, building a sense of collective efficacy within neighborhoods and building diverse links across geography, ethnicity, and social class.

## From Engagement to Prosperity

What lessons do natural cultural districts have for urban policy? Residents of all urban neighborhoods deserve cultural opportunities and access. In many parts of the city, expanding those opportunities will require long-term commitments on the part of government and philanthropy. Some neighborhoods simply do not have the social ingredients necessary to sustain a vibrant creative sector without long-term support. Others may be candidates for becoming natural cultural districts but will not change overnight.

One reason that it makes sense to begin with existing and emerging “natural” cultural districts is that they already have the basics in place. They generally have a diverse population that is already involved in creative activities, although not always in their immediate neighborhood. The presence of artists, nonprofit organizations, and commercial cultural firms provides a foundation on which to build.

Many poor urban neighborhoods have these ingredients but lack the consumer base to help them take off. SIAP’s study of a Germantown neighborhood in Philadelphia shows the challenges facing creative entrepreneurs to develop a market in a low-income neighborhood with a high-crime rate. Poor security, low street traffic, difficulty connecting with potential participants and customers in other parts of the city, and lack of business expertise—all prevent these entrepreneurs from transforming their “sweat equity” into solid enterprises.

Whether established or emerging, the core dilemma faced by natural cultural districts is what economists call *externalities*—the artists, nonprofits, and commercial cultural firms in these districts create a huge amount of social value but have no way of reaping their full reward from doing so. Clearly, the entire neighborhood benefits when an emerging cultural district sees its poverty rate decline and its population increase, but the artists and organizations that stimulated the revival glean only the most indirect benefit. By the same token, a developer who profits from an “unslummed” neighborhood may

never realize that the efforts of local residents to create a community arts scene laid the foundation for revival.

A similar type of market-failure affects the creative sector labor market. To begin, the “winner-take-all” nature of artistic labor markets tends to attract more entrants than are likely to succeed. At the same time, the creative class perspective places a disproportionate value on some workers over others, even though “success” in the art worlds is possible only through the coordinated efforts of a variety of workers—including artists, impresarios, technicians, trainers, dealers, and distributors. Because some occupations are valued more than others, technicians and other unglamorous creative and cultural workers do not receive rewards commensurate to their contribution. This leads to a misallocation of human resources as “too many” people enter artistic professions than can succeed while “too few” people enter arts production and technical occupations even though there are significant opportunities.

Indeed, although the informal arts sector is a source of energy and innovation, its expansion is also a symptom of market failure. While we may appreciate the role that street musicians play in animating urban spaces, it is doubtful that their donations at the end of the day are commensurate with the value they have created.

How can we address these examples of market-failure? A natural cultural district policy must begin with the commitment to “do no harm.” We must remember that these districts are generally self-organized. Ultimately, their success will stem from the commitment of those involved in creating them, not from some outside entity. Still, there are ways of supporting these grass-roots efforts.

First, there is a clear rationale for social investment. Given the significant positive externalities associated with these districts, investment strategies that are profit-seeking—not necessarily profit-maximizing—could pay huge dividends to both the investors and the general community. Smaller loans for pre-development and bridge financing, especially if linked to technical assistance, could increase the success rate of individual firms and districts in general.

Second, the public sector can contribute to the success of these districts by simply doing its job better. Providing security, clean and safe streets, usable public spaces, and consistent and honest

enforcement of zoning and development regulations would make the world much easier for those trying to cultivate natural cultural districts. Strategic grants for place-making activities—distinctive streetscapes, park facilities, local festivals—would also provide returns greater than their cost.

Third, we need to develop workforce policies that provide young people interested in the creative sector with the information and opportunities to make good decisions about entering the field. Whether that means integrating business courses into the curricula of creative arts high schools or developing apprenticeship programs for craft and technical occupations, improving the fit between creative sector opportunities and the interests of young residents of low-wealth communities is a critical strategy for improving the labor market and reducing the economic inequality currently associated with the arts. Although these policies are not place-specific, natural cultural districts could provide an excellent entry point for connecting with young adults as they make decisions about their future.

This is a strikingly modest agenda of concerted action. A natural cultural district, ultimately, can succeed only if its participants—artists, organizations, businesses, and residents—are willing to commit their resources. Investments, technical assistance, and public services can be important only at the margins.

Finally, we need better data and understanding of how natural cultural districts work. We need a means of tracking and monitoring both the direct economic flows associated with creative sector activity and the non-economic benefits that accrue from it. Although what we currently know provides a convincing case for action, we do not yet have the tools to evaluate which strategies for encouraging these districts are most effective, nor can we measure the indirect social benefits they generate.

Cultivating natural cultural districts can be but one approach to a region’s community or economic development policy. However, because of their strategic importance to the overall health of the city and the region’s creative sector as well as their potential for generating social benefits beyond their purely commercial success, natural cultural districts are a strategy that deserves the attention of government, philanthropy, and the private sector.

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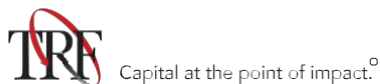
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### About The Reinvestment Fund

TRF is a national leader in the financing of neighborhood revitalization. A development financial corporation with a wealth building agenda for low- and moderate-income people and places, TRF uses its assets to finance housing, community facilities, commercial real estate and businesses and public policy research across the Mid-Atlantic. TRF conducts research and analysis on policy issues that influence neighborhood revitalization and economic growth both to help it identify opportunities to invest its own resources and to help public sector and private clients with their own strategies to preserve and rebuild vulnerable communities.



### About SIAP

The Social Impact of the Arts Project (SIAP) is a policy research group at the University of Pennsylvania's School of Social Policy & Practice. Since 1994 SIAP has conducted research on metropolitan Philadelphia to explore the structure of the creative sector, the dynamics of cultural participation, and the relationship of the arts to community well-being. SIAP leads the field in the development of empirical methods for studying links among cultural engagement, community-building, and neighborhood revitalization.

### THE ROCKEFELLER FOUNDATION™

TRF and SIAP would like to thank The Rockefeller Foundation for supporting the collaboration that made this paper possible.





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